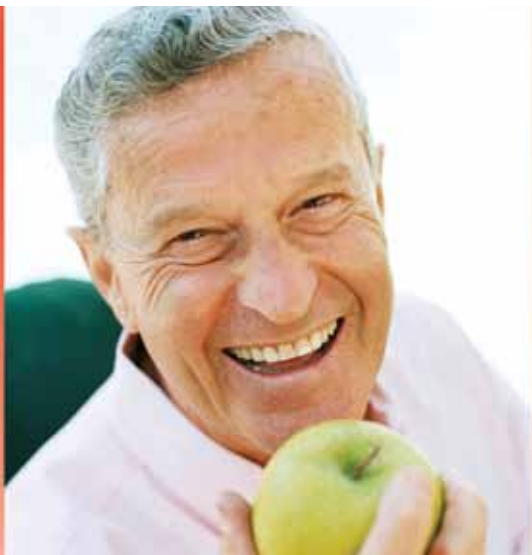
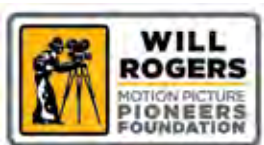


Managing High Blood Pressure



- *Managing Blood Pressure*
- *Taking Medication*
- *Quitting Smoking*
- *Eating Healthier*
- *Keeping Active*
- *Reducing Stress*



Managing Blood Pressure

High blood pressure has no symptoms, but it can lead to serious health problems. With self-care, you can manage blood pressure and protect your health.



What Is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the artery walls. High blood pressure means the force is too strong. This also means the heart is working extra hard to move blood.

Why Is Managing Blood Pressure Important?

Over time, high blood pressure can damage the heart, blood vessels, eyes, and other organs. Controlling blood pressure helps prevent this damage.



The Goals of Self-Care

Self-care combined with your healthcare provider's treatment program is the best way to protect your health. Self-care means:

- Managing your condition and improving your health to feel your best.
- Responding to test results and keeping follow-up appointments.
- Limiting risk of future health problems.

Checking Blood Pressure

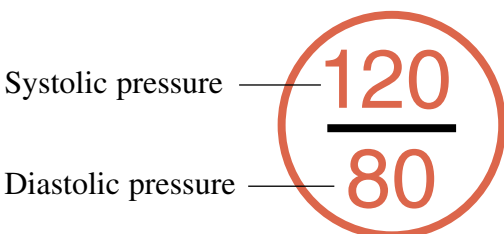
Checking blood pressure is quick, painless, and easy. It can be done at a healthcare provider's office, a health fair, or even at home. A cuff is inflated around your arm. Blood pressure is measured both as your heart pumps and between beats.



What Do Your Numbers Mean?

Checking your blood pressure results in two numbers, one over the other. If either the top or bottom number is consistently high, you may have high blood pressure.

- The top number is pressure when the heart beats (systolic).
- The bottom number is pressure when the heart rests between beats (diastolic).
- Ask your healthcare provider what blood pressure numbers are healthy for you.



Understanding Risk

Certain things about your lifestyle and your body can increase the risk of high blood pressure and heart problems. The key to self-care is to change as many risks as you can.

Reduce Your Risk



- Choose foods that are low in salt and saturated (animal) fat.



- Get plenty of exercise. Aim for 30 minutes of activity on most days of the week.



- Maintain a healthy weight. Lose any extra pounds.



- Don't smoke. Avoid drinking more than 1 alcoholic drink a day for women, 2 for men.

Be Aware of Other Risks

If you have any of the risks below, you should take extra care to lower your blood pressure.

- You're over age 60.
- You're African American.
- A parent, brother, or sister has high blood pressure or heart disease.
- You have diabetes, heart disease, or kidney disease.



Taking Medication

Your healthcare provider may prescribe medication to help lower your blood pressure. For the most benefit, continue with all parts of your treatment plan while taking medication.



Types of Medication

There are different types of medications to help treat high blood pressure. Some act on the heart and blood vessels. Others remove excess fluid or salt from the body. Your healthcare provider will choose the best medication for your needs.

Taking Medication Safely

- Be sure to take your medication at the same time each day.
- Write yourself notes, use an alarm, or keep your pills by your toothbrush to remember them.
- Ask your healthcare provider what you should do if you miss a pill. Don't just take two the next time.
- Never stop taking medication unless instructed by your healthcare provider. Doing so could be harmful.



Checking BP at Home

Your healthcare provider can show you how to check blood pressure at home. Here are some tips to help:

- Read and follow your blood pressure monitor instructions carefully.
- Do not smoke or have any caffeine for 30 minutes before taking your blood pressure.
- Sit and relax for a few minutes.
- Take your blood pressure. Wait 5 minutes, then take it again on the same arm.
- Keep a log of your results.



Quitting Smoking

Chances are, you already know that smoking is bad for your health. But now that you have high blood pressure, it's even more important to kick the habit for good.

Reasons to Quit

- Smoking increases blood pressure and damages blood vessels.
- Smoking raises your risk of stroke and heart disease.
- If you quit now, you will reduce your risk of heart disease, and your treatment plan will work even better.

Tips for Breaking the Habit

- Ask your healthcare provider if nicotine replacement products or other medications are right for you.
- Consider counseling with a healthcare provider. A combination of medications and counseling has proved most effective in helping people quit smoking.
- Check your local phone book or hospital for smoking cessation programs.
- Set a quit date. Share it with your friends and family and stick to it.
- Don't worry about setbacks. It's common to have several quit attempts before succeeding. If you slip up and smoke, just get back on track as soon as possible.



Eating Healthier

Changing the way you eat is key to managing blood pressure. Ask your healthcare provider about the DASH eating plan. When combined with eating less salt, this plan gives your body the best results.



Following DASH

The DASH eating plan was designed to help people reduce high blood pressure. To use the DASH plan:

- Build your meals around vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.
- Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy foods.

Reducing Salt

Eating less salt may lower your blood pressure. To cut back:

- Choose fresh foods when you can.
- Limit canned, dried, packaged, and fast foods. These contain a lot of salt.
- Season foods with lemon and herbs instead of salt.



Making Better Choices

Eating healthier isn't as hard as you might think. The trick is to take small steps, one at a time. Start by making better food choices.

Choose	Instead of
Veggie sticks, fruit, and whole-grain breads	Snack foods and pastries
Fresh and homemade foods made without salt	Processed foods (canned soups, frozen dinners)
Sandwiches with freshly roasted or low-salt lean meats	Fast foods (pizza, hamburgers, french fries)
Low-salt or unsalted nuts, popcorn, and pretzels	Salted nuts, popcorn, and potato chips
Water and fruit juice	Sodas and vegetable juice



When You're Shopping

Look for labels with low salt (sodium) content. Buy fresh rather than processed or canned foods.



When You're Cooking

Make dishes from scratch when you can. Don't salt your food when cooking or at the table.

Keeping Active

Exercise can help you lower blood pressure and maintain a healthy weight. Even a simple activity like walking or gardening can greatly benefit your health.



Getting Started

- Always talk to your healthcare provider before starting an exercise program.
- Increase your activity gradually.
- Take a short walk once a day.
- Go to the park with a friend.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park your car a little farther from stores.

Moving On to Brisk Exercise

Once you have added some activity to your day, you're ready to move on to brisk exercise. Choose an activity that's fun. Try bicycling, power walking, volleyball, or swimming.



Maintaining a Healthy Weight

Ask your healthcare provider what weight range is healthiest for you. If you need to lose extra weight, increasing activity and reducing calories can help.



Tips for Fitness

- Choose aerobic exercises. These are activities that make your heart and lungs work harder than they normally do. Over time, this can help strengthen your heart.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you do muscle-building exercises, such as lifting weights. Make sure you're doing the exercises safely.
- Allow plenty of time to stretch, warm up, and cool down.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Bring vegetable sticks and fruit for exercise snacks.
- Exercise with a partner.



Reducing Stress

Ongoing stress constricts blood vessels, which increases blood pressure. You can't avoid all stress. But you may be able to control your response to it.

Keeping Stress Under Control

- Exercise. Sign up for a dance or yoga class. Take a long walk.
- Take slow, deep breaths when you start to feel stressed.
- Try meditation.
- Check your local hospital or phone book for stress reduction classes.
- Break up jobs into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- Make time for yourself.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Take time to recharge. Whether it's taking a vacation or having 5-minute work breaks, be sure to give yourself time to rest.



The information in this guide has been accumulated from current medical literature and is generally accepted by the medical community at this time. However, this information is not meant as a substitute for personal medical advice. If you have worrisome symptoms or conditions, contact a physician immediately.

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