



A Focus on High Blood Pressure

BY CONNIE SUNDERHAUS, RN-BC, CCM

If you have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, there are several different groups you may fall into. You may have just found out that your blood pressure is high, or you have had high blood pressure but have never been treated for it. On the other hand, you may have had high blood pressure, but it is not high all of the time and you have not been taking medicine or seen your doctor lately. If your blood pressure is higher than 130/80 you could have hypertension, and seeing your doctor and being a part of a treatment plan is very important to your health.

WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE AND HYPERTENSION?

The heart serves as a pump, pushing blood through your arteries. The measurement of the pressure created within the arteries is known as blood pressure. When your blood pressure is taken, there are two numbers, the top number, or systolic blood pressure, and the bottom number, or diastolic blood pressure. Each of the numbers is important, as each number gives information about how your cardiovascular system is working.

The top number is the heart when it is pumping blood and the bottom number is the heart at rest. When the pressure is too high over a period of time, which is known as hypertension, then there is an opportunity for many complications, including kidney damage, a higher chance of a stroke, eye damage, and damage to the heart and blood vessels.

Categories for Blood Pressure Levels in Adults (in mmHg, or millimeters of mercury)

Category	Systolic (top number)	And Or	Diastolic (bottom number)
Normal	Less than 120	And	Less than 80
Prohypertension	120-139	Or	80-89
High blood pressure			
Stage 1	140-159	Or	90-99
Stage 2	160 or higher	Or	100 or higher

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of Health
and Human
Services

WHAT DO YOU DO?

1. See your doctor.
2. Have a plan. You and your doctor should talk about what is the right treatment for you. It is *not uncommon* for the plan to change if your blood pressure does not reach or stay at normal levels. The plan should include things you can do in your daily life and may include medications.

YOUR DAILY LIFE

- If you smoke, stop immediately.
- Exercise. Studies show that regular exercise, as simple as walking, can help lower blood pressure.
- Low sodium diet. People with high blood pressure should have no more than 2,400 mg of sodium (equal to about 1 teaspoon of salt) per day. Reading the labels on all of the food that you use will help in keep track of how much of the sodium you consume in a day.
- Keep track of your blood pressure. Select a blood pressure machine that you can use easily and read easily. When taking your blood pressure:
 - Do not have coffee, smoke or have alcohol for at least one hour.
 - Sit down and relax for about 10 minutes before taking your blood pressure.
 - Write down both the top and bottom number when you are finished.
- Medicine. Your doctor may order medicine to keep your blood pressure in control. There are a number of medicines used to manage blood pressure. You and your doctor should talk about the type of medicine, when it should be taken and possible side effects. Remember to take your pills as directed.
- Remember, it's your plan, your blood pressure and your health. 