

Blood Pressure

Everyone has blood pressure - you need it to live. Blood pressure is the force created by the heart as it pushes blood into the arteries. Each time the heart beats the blood is pumped in and out and creates a surge of pressure in the arteries. This is called the systolic (or upper) pressure. When the heart relaxes between beats the blood pressure goes down and this is called the diastolic (or lower) pressure.

Blood pressure is recorded as these two numbers:

Systolic/Diastolic
Example: 118/78

High blood pressure (often called hypertension) is referred to as the “silent killer” because it does not usually cause any symptoms. In fact, you can look and feel fine while having very high blood pressure and being at high risk for heart disease. Anyone can have high blood pressure. Those who are overweight, smoke, and have a family history of hypertension are at higher risk for high blood pressure. Find out if you have high blood pressure by getting your blood pressure checked regularly and then take the appropriate steps to lower it if it is high. If it is normal, that is great. Learn how to keep it that way.

Your Health Is In Your Own Hands

-Get your blood pressure checked. It is quick, easy and painless.

-Take control and follow the steps below to prevent or control high blood pressure:

- Aim for a healthy weight. Lose weight if you are overweight and maintain your weight if it is normal.
- Remember to be active. Try to exercise 30 minutes on most days of the week, preferably every day. It might help to develop a walking plan or find a friend to exercise with. Remember to always speak with your physician prior to starting an exercise program.
- Follow a healthy eating plan. Limit food high in sodium and salt by choosing healthy alternatives. For some people, too much salt can aggravate blood pressure, so cutting back is a good idea. Try substituting salt with other seasonings in your diet, such as pepper, garlic, and vinegar.

This resource provides brief, general information about this health care topic. It does not take the place of the instructions you receive from your health care providers. Discuss the risks and benefits of therapies with your doctor and always take medication as prescribed. For answers to other questions talk to your health care provider.

For more information or a referral, please call the NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital Preventive Cardiology Program at (212) 305-4866 or visit our website at:

<http://www.hearthealthtimes.com>.



- Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables and low-fat diet dairy products.
- Watch what you drink. Cut back on alcoholic beverages. Men can have a maximum of 2 drinks per day and women can have a maximum of 1 drink per day.
- Take high blood pressure medication as recommended by your physician.

Goals:

- Achieve and maintain a blood pressure of < 140/90 mm/Hg.
- Optimally, achieve and maintain a blood pressure of < 120/80 mm/Hg.

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