

High Blood Pressure

You have the power to lower your blood pressure and live a healthy, full life. High blood pressure, also called hypertension, raises your risk for heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and damage to your eyes. This worksheet will give you tips on how to eat less salt, check your blood pressure at home, and learn about your medicines.

Know your blood pressure numbers

What do these numbers mean?

157 / 98

Systolic (upper):

This is the amount of pressure it takes for the heart to squeeze blood to the body.

Diastolic (lower):

This is the amount of pressure when the heart is relaxed and filling with blood.

Normal blood pressure	Less than 120 and less than 80
At risk for high blood pressure	120-139 and 80-89
High blood pressure	140 or higher or 90 or higher

Write your recent numbers here: _____ / _____

Eat less salt

Eating less salt can help lower your blood pressure. Salt is also called sodium on food labels. Try to eat less than 1500mg of sodium a day. 1 teaspoon of salt has 2300mg of sodium. Don't add salt to food while cooking or eating.

How to read a food label:

1. Look at the serving size and servings per container. This can has 2 servings.
2. Look at the mg of sodium. In this can, a 1 cup serving has 400mg of sodium. This whole can has 800mg of sodium.



Check off the things you will do:

- Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Cook with fresh herbs and spices or use vinegars and lemon juice for flavor.
- Rinse canned foods like vegetables, beans, and tuna with water to remove salty liquid.
- For salads, choose oil and vinegar. When eating out, ask for dressing on the side.
- When shopping, choose reduced sodium, low sodium, light sodium, or sodium free foods.

Foods to avoid:

- Fast food like pizza, tacos, burritos, cheeseburgers, fries, and fried chicken
- Ham, bacon, corned beef, hot dogs, sausage, salt pork, packaged meats, and cheese
- Salty foods in cans and jars like pickles, sauces, dips, salad dressings, soups, and broths
- Packaged foods like salty snacks and chips, mixes for sauces, rice and noodle meals
- Frozen meals and foods that contain soy sauce or are marinated, smoked, or cooked in broth

Check your blood pressure at home

Checking your blood pressure at home will help you and your doctor or nurse see if your numbers are normal or high. Ask your doctor or nurse to help you find a home blood pressure monitor. Don't use finger or wrist monitors.

The first time you take your blood pressure at home, do it on both arms. After that, use the arm that had the highest numbers.

How to check your blood pressure:

1. Use a cuff that fits your arm (example: adult, large, or extra large). Ask your doctor or nurse what size to use.
2. Rest for 5 minutes before you take your blood pressure.
3. If you drink alcohol, smoke, or exercise, wait for 30 minutes before you take your blood pressure.
4. Sit with your back against a chair and both feet on the floor. Rest your arm on a table at heart level. Don't cross your legs.
5. Take your blood pressure 2 times a day at the same time for 7 days. Save your numbers on the machine or write them down. Show these numbers to your doctor or nurse.



View product ratings of blood pressure monitors at www.pcna.net/patients

Learn about your medicines

Most people with high blood pressure need 2 or 3 medicines to lower blood pressure.

Your doctor or nurse may need to change your medicines to find what works best for you. This is normal.



✓ Check off the things you will do:

- Ask your doctor or nurse if there is a best time to take your medicines, like before or after a meal, in the morning, or at night.
- Always use a pill box, even if you only take 1 medicine each day.
- Ask your family or friends to remind you to take your medicines.
- Write down your medicines and always carry this list with you. Show it to your doctor or nurse at each visit.
- At the pharmacy, ask for bottles with large print and tops that are easy to open.
- If you feel bad after taking a medicine, talk with your doctor or nurse right away.
- Don't stop taking your medicines until you talk with your doctor or nurse.



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