

Blood Pressure

How do you measure up?



Check your blood
pressure numbers.



Eat a healthy diet.



Exercise.



Learn about
your medicines.



PCNA

PREVENTIVE CARDIOVASCULAR
NURSES ASSOCIATION

Know your numbers



“What should my blood pressure be?”

This booklet will help you find ways to prevent and treat high blood pressure. You will learn how to check your blood pressure (BP), improve your lifestyle and understand your medicine. Take the quiz in each section first and then read the information and tips to help you reach your goals.

Quiz

Please circle Yes or No in the right column.

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| 1 | Can high blood pressure hurt your kidneys? | Yes OR No |
| 2 | Is the top number known as diastolic blood pressure? | Yes OR No |
| 3 | Is blood pressure of 140/90 normal? | Yes OR No |
| 4 | Will getting more exercise lower your blood pressure? | Yes OR No |

Quiz Answers: 1.Yes, 2.No, 3.No, 4.Yes

Your blood pressure numbers

Blood Pressure _____ / _____ Date _____
systolic / diastolic

Your Brain

Your Heart and Blood Vessels

Your Kidneys

3

Check blood pressure at home



“How do I check my blood pressure at home?”

Checking your blood pressure at home will help your doctor or nurse know if your numbers are normal or high.



Important Note: Blood pressure numbers are often lower at home than in the clinic. The goal for blood pressure at home is less than 120 (systolic) and less than 80 (diastolic).

Quiz

Please circle Yes or No in the right column.

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| 1 | Are blood pressure numbers usually lower at home than in the clinic? | Yes OR No |
| 2 | Should you measure your arm before choosing a blood pressure monitor? | Yes OR No |
| 3 | Every time you check your blood pressure, should you take 2-3 readings? | Yes OR No |
| 4 | Should you wait 60 minutes after drinking alcohol, smoking or exercise before checking your blood pressure? | Yes OR No |

Quiz Answers: 1.Yes, 2.Yes, 3.Yes, 4.No

Choose a blood pressure monitor

- Choose a good home blood pressure monitor by asking your nurse or doctor for advice.
- Bring your monitor to your next appointment so your nurse or doctor can check the measurement.
- Do not use a finger or wrist monitor.
- To find the cuff size that is right for you, measure the size of your upper arm with a tape measure.
 - If you do not have a tape measure, you can use a piece of string or ribbon to measure around your arm, then compare the length of the string or ribbon to a ruler to see what size cuff you need.
 - You can also print out a paper measuring tape at pcna.net/bp.
- This chart will also help you choose the correct cuff size.

Distance Around Upper Arm	8.5"-10" (22-26 cm)	10.5"-13" (27-34 cm)	13.5"-17" (35-44 cm)	17.5"-20" (45-52 cm)
Cuff Size	Small Adult	Adult	Large Adult	Adult Thigh Cuff

How to take & record blood pressure

- Wait for at least 30 minutes after drinking alcohol or caffeine, smoking or exercise before you take a reading.
- Rest for at least 5 minutes before you take a reading.
- Sit with your legs uncrossed, your back supported and your feet on the floor. Rest your arm at heart level on a table.
- Measure your blood pressure in both arms the first time you use a monitor. Use the arm with the highest reading to take future readings.
- Take your blood pressure twice a day for 7 days. Take 2-3 readings in the morning before taking your medicines, and in the evening. Each reading should be 2 minutes apart.
- Use a log to record your readings or print the numbers stored in your monitor.
- Always take your log or bring your monitor with stored readings to show your doctor or nurse.

Get more exercise



“Lowering my blood pressure can help prevent a heart attack or stroke.”

What exercises are safe?

Always talk to your doctor or nurse before starting or changing your exercise routine to find out what exercises are safe for you.

Quiz

Please circle Yes or No in the right column.

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| 1 | Will walking 30 minutes a day (all at once or in three 10-minute sessions) lower your blood pressure? | Yes OR No |
| 2 | Does exercise increase your blood sugar? | Yes OR No |
| 3 | Can exercise reduce stress and depression? | Yes OR No |
| 4 | Will exercise increase your weight? | Yes OR No |
| 5 | Can exercise help you with balance and strength? | Yes OR No |

Quiz Answers: 1.Yes, 2.No, 3.Yes, 4.No, 5.Yes

Why is exercise good for you?

Exercise helps prevent heart attack and stroke by:

- Lowering your blood pressure
- Increasing your HDL, the good cholesterol
- Controlling your blood sugar
- Helping you lose weight
- Reducing stress, depression and anxiety
- Improving muscle strength, balance and fitness

Exercise tips

- Choose walking, biking, swimming and dancing. These are all good exercises for the heart and blood pressure.
- Exercise at a moderate pace for 30-60 minutes a day. You should be able to talk while you exercise.
- Warm up and stretch before exercise. Start walking or biking slowly, then increase your pace.
- Cool down! Walk or bike slowly and stretch for at least 5 minutes after you exercise.
- You can do three 10-minute exercise sessions or two 15-minute sessions per day.

Stick with your exercise program

- Set your alarm 15 minutes earlier and go out for a morning walk.
- Go for a 15-minute walk on your lunch break.
- Walk or ride bikes with family or friends after dinner.
- Join a gym or a group program.



Eat less salt



“Can eating less salt lower my blood pressure?”

You can lower your blood pressure by losing weight or eating less salt, also called sodium. As part of a healthy eating pattern, the goal is less than **2,300** mg of sodium per day—about 1 teaspoon of salt. Ideal amount is less than **1,500** mg per day, especially if you have high blood pressure, are age 50 or older, or African American.

As you eat less salt, your taste will adjust to the lower levels. It may take time to reach your goal but cutting your daily salt intake by 1/2 teaspoon can improve your blood pressure and your heart health.

Most people get most of their sodium from packaged and restaurant foods. The top 10 sources of sodium in American diets are:

- bread and rolls
- cold cuts and cured meats
- pizza
- fresh and processed poultry
- soups
- sandwiches such as hot dogs, hamburgers and submarine sandwiches
- cheese
- pasta dishes such as lasagna, spaghetti and pasta salad
- meat dishes including meatloaf, chili and stew
- snacks such as chips, pretzels, popcorn and crackers

10 easy steps for cutting sodium

- 1** Read nutrition labels for serving size and mg. of sodium. Choose foods with lower sodium.
- 2** Prepare your own food when you can. Don't salt foods before or during cooking or eating.
- 3** Add flavor without sodium. Use herbs and spices.
- 4** Choose fresh or frozen meats instead of processed meats. Check to see if salt water or saline has been added.
- 5** Use fresh, frozen, low sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables.
- 6** Rinse canned foods such as tuna, vegetables and beans to reduce sodium.
- 7** Choose fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products in place of processed cheese products and spreads.
- 8** Choose unsalted or low-sodium nuts, seeds, chips and pretzels.
- 9** Choose light or reduced-sodium ketchup, soy sauce, salad dressings and seasonings.
- 10** At restaurants, ask for your meal to be prepared without salt and with sauces and dressings served 'on the side.' Smaller serving sizes also mean less sodium.

Nutrition Facts	
2 servings per container	
Serving size	1 cup (246g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	90
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 2g	3%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	3%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 25mg	8%
Sodium 400mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 11g	4%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

The DASH diet helps you reduce sodium, increase potassium and improve your blood pressure. Visit <http://bit.ly/1qvoimN>, *In Brief: Your Guide to Lowering Your Blood Pressure with DASH*.

Reach a healthy weight

When you choose healthy foods, you can help lower your blood pressure.

A healthy plate = A healthy weight

Balancing Calories

- Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- Avoid oversized portions.

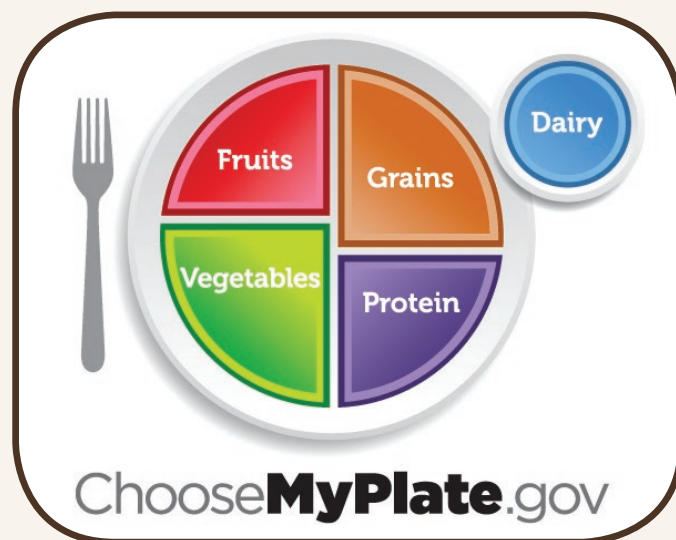
Foods to Increase

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Make at least half your grains whole grains.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.

Foods to Limit

- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread and frozen meals and choose the foods with the lower amounts of sodium.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

How to create a healthy plate



View tips and sample meal plans at ChooseMyPlate.gov.

Ways to save 100 calories

1. Eat 1 cup of whole grain cereal instead of 2.
2. Add lettuce and tomato (instead of cheese) to your sandwich.
3. Use fat-free salad dressing.
4. Eat low-fat yogurt instead of toast and butter.
5. Use mustard instead of mayo on sandwiches.
6. Order thin crust instead of thick crust pizza.
7. Eat fresh fruit instead of fruit juice.
8. Use smaller bowls and plates for your food.



Tips for losing weight

- Count your calories, then eat 100 less calories a day.
- Walk 30-60 minutes most days of the week.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- Eat smaller portions. Portion size for starch and protein should not be larger than a deck of cards.
- Fill up on salads and vegetables.
- Drink a large glass of water before your meal.
- Fill up on foods such as low-sodium soup.
- Keep a food diary to keep track of what you eat.

Learn about your medicines



“How does medicine lower my blood pressure?”

Most people with high blood pressure need at least 2 medicines to lower their blood pressure.

Medicine Checklist

- ☒ Check off the things you do:
- ☐ I know the name of each medicine that I take.
- ☐ I carry a list of my medicines with me at all times.
- ☐ I know how and when to take my medicine.
- ☐ I know what side effects I need to report to my doctor or nurse when I take my medicine.
- ☐ I tell my doctor or nurse about all of the vitamins, herbs, supplements and pills I take.
- ☐ I never stop taking a medicine without calling my doctor or nurse.

How do blood pressure medicines work?

There are many medicines that lower blood pressure. They all work in different ways. Most medicines:

- Relax the arteries or
- Remove extra fluid or
- Allow your heart to beat more easily

Calendar Refill



Tips on taking your medicines

- Use a weekly pillbox to help you remember to take your medicine, even if you only take one pill.
- Take your pills at the same time each day. Use a timer or alarm on your watch or phone to remind you to take your medicine.
- Write down on your calendar when you need to refill your medicine – at least 1-2 weeks before you run out.
- When you travel, carry your medicine list, and at least 1-2 days of extra medicine.
- Keep taking your medicines even if your blood pressure is at your goal.

Things to talk about with your doctor or nurse

- Ways to make your medicine schedule easier.
- A generic blood pressure medicine to help lower cost.
- If you don't feel well after taking a medicine, call your doctor or nurse. Don't just stop taking the medicine.

Make a plan



“We can do better at taking care of our blood pressure.”

Now it is time to make a plan. Small changes can make a big difference. Pick some things you plan to do.

Checklist

- ☒ Check off the things you plan to do:
- ☐ I will buy a blood pressure monitor and check my numbers at home.
- ☐ I will eat less salt and more fruits and vegetables.
- ☐ I will ask my doctor or nurse what exercises are safe for me.
- ☐ I will walk at least 30 minutes each day.
- ☐ I will carry a list of my medicines with me at all times.
- ☐ I will talk to my doctor or nurse before I stop taking any medicines.

Small changes make big changes in systolic blood pressure

These healthy changes can lower your blood pressure by several points.

	What to Do	How Much Your Systolic (Upper) Pressure Will Go Down
Weight	Eat less and move more to reach a healthy weight.	2-5 mm Hg for each 5-pound weight loss
Exercise	Exercise for 30 minutes most days of the week.	2-8 mm Hg
Diet	Eat fresh fruits, vegetables and low-fat foods.	3-11 mm Hg
Salt (Sodium)	Eat less sodium (salt) each day.	2-6 mm Hg
Limit Alcohol	Men: No more than 2 drinks a day. Women: No more than 1 drink a day.	3-4 mm Hg

Stopping smoking and other tobacco products is important to your health. Smoking can temporarily raise your blood pressure and can damage your arteries.

“I have the
power to improve
my health!”



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How to obtain more brochures



Download an electronic version
at pcna.net/patients

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