

# Don't live in denial: **Know your blood pressure basics**



Do you understand what high blood pressure is and how it affects your health? If you have high blood pressure and are letting it go untreated, you are likely doing lasting damage to your heart, arteries and other organs.

Long-term high blood pressure puts you at risk for heart disease, stroke and other conditions. Knowing the facts and seeking treatment could make a difference in your health and your life.

## **What is hypertension?**

Hypertension, more commonly called high blood pressure, refers to the force of your blood against the inside walls of your arteries. Pressure levels typically vary throughout the day, but when they remain elevated over time, it is called hypertension.

Hypertension is dangerous because it raises your risk for heart attack and heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, vision loss and circulation problems. The current expert guidelines, known as the JNC 8 (Joint National Committee) guidelines recommend treatment and ongoing monitoring for adults under 60 years old whose blood pressure is 140/90 or higher, and 150/90 for adults over 60 without diabetes or chronic kidney disease.

For adults age 18 and over, with either diabetes or chronic kidney disease, experts recommend treatment and monitoring for a blood pressure 140/90 or higher.

If you have hypertension, follow your doctor's plan to reach your personal blood pressure goal.

## **How is prehypertension different?**

If you have prehypertension, it means your blood pressure is elevated but not yet high enough to be in the hypertension range.

You're at risk to develop hypertension in the future. Consider the healthy lifestyle choices described in Six Actions for Better Blood Pressure, on the back page.

## **1 in 3 adults**

has high blood pressure, and only about half of them have their condition under control.



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### *Get your personal heart health score*

Use the QR code reader on your smart phone to calculate your health risks.

## Preventing or controlling high blood pressure

If you have prehypertension or hypertension, you and your health care provider should work together to reduce your blood pressure. Schedule an appointment to discuss a plan and timetable for reaching your blood pressure goal.

Following the six steps listed below can help you prevent and control high blood pressure.

## Six actions for better blood pressure



**Reach and maintain a healthy weight**



**Follow a healthy eating plan**



**Use moderation if you drink alcohol\***



**Be physically active\*\***



**Eat foods with less sodium (salt)**



**Take prescribed medications as directed**

*It's important to check your blood pressure regularly to make sure your treatment plan is working. Your doctor may need to adjust the type or dose of medication you are taking.*

\*According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, moderate alcohol use is defined as:

No more than 1 drink/day for women, No more than 2 drinks/day for men

\*\*Talk with your doctor before starting an exercise program or increasing your activity level.

He or she can tell you what types and amounts of activities are safe for you.

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Source: Mayo Clinic - High blood pressure dangers: Hypertension's effects on your body, American Heart Association - The Facts about High Blood Pressure, Changes You can Make to Manage High Blood Pressure, Partnering With Your Doctor to Treat High Blood Pressure, Understanding Blood Pressure Readings, JNC 8 Guidelines - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), High Blood Pressure Fact Sheet, Alcohol and Public Health: Frequently Asked Questions