



Lifesaving Tips About ...

High Blood Pressure and PAD

What Is High Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is a measure of the force of blood flow within the walls of your **arteries** (blood vessels that transport blood away from the heart). It is measured in millimeters of mercury, or mmHg. When your health care team checks your blood pressure, they record two important numbers.

- The first number is called **systolic pressure**. This is the amount of pressure it takes for your heart to push blood through the arteries of your entire body. Systolic pressure below 120 is considered normal. If you have several readings of systolic pressure above 130, your blood pressure may be considered “elevated,” or higher than normal.
- The second number is called **diastolic pressure**. This number measures the amount of pressure on your artery walls

as the heart relaxes between beats. Diastolic pressure below 80 is normal; 90 or higher means you have high blood pressure.

Why Is High Blood Pressure Dangerous?

High blood pressure makes the heart work too hard. Constant, elevated pressure can harm blood vessels and the heart itself. Known as the “silent killer,” high blood pressure often has no warning signs or symptoms before a major health event, like a heart attack or stroke, can happen.

The good news is that high blood pressure can be controlled and treated. You can prevent or delay health problems related to high blood pressure by having your blood pressure checked at every health care visit and by taking action to reach your blood pressure goal.

What Is the Link Between High Blood Pressure and Peripheral Artery Disease?

People who have high blood pressure have a higher risk of developing **peripheral artery disease (PAD)**. This is a common circulatory problem that occurs when your legs’ arteries become narrowed or clogged with fatty deposits called **plaque**. Treating high blood pressure is an important part of treating PAD. For people with PAD and other conditions like diabetes, controlling high blood pressure also can help lower your chances of having eye problems and kidney disease.

What Should My Blood Pressure Goal Be, and What Can I Do to Reach My Goal?

If you have high blood pressure, work with your health care team to reach a blood pressure goal of less than 130/80 mmHg. The National Institutes of Health recommends the following ways to control high blood pressure:



Lose Excess Weight and Stay Active

Aim to be active at least 30 minutes each day. You can break up activity into shorter periods;

for example, you could walk for 10 minutes three times a day, or move your arms and legs while watching your favorite TV show. Ask your health care team for help building a new routine. Tell your friends and family about your weight-loss goals and ask them for support.



Eat Food That Is Good for Your Heart

Incorporate heart-healthy foods into your daily meals. Talk with your health care team or nutritionist to learn more. Some examples of heart-healthy foods include whole grains, berries, leafy green vegetables (such as spinach, kale, and collard greens), walnuts, and dark chocolate.

Remember: Before starting any diet or exercise plan, discuss it with your health care team.



Quit Smoking

Reducing or stopping cigarette use significantly reduces your risk for worsening PAD and lowers your odds for other health problems. Ask your health care team how they can help you quit.



Reduce Your Salt Intake

High sodium levels in your food raise your blood pressure and increase your risk for developing complications. Try cooking at home rather than eating out so you have more control over the amount of sodium in your food. To help decrease your salt intake, limit canned or processed foods, and try the other tips on this information sheet below. Ask your health care team for more ideas or if you have any questions about your sodium levels.



Be Careful with Alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure. The CDC recommends no more than two drinks per day for men or one drink per day for women.



Take Medicines as Prescribed

There are many types of medicines to control high blood pressure. Your health care team will prescribe the right medicine, or maybe even more than one, that works for you. If you need medicine for your high blood pressure, make sure you understand what it does and how and when to take it. Use the medicine as prescribed and discuss any side effects with your health care team.



Work with Your Health Care Team

At each visit, ask what your blood pressure numbers are, what they mean, and what you need to do to reach your blood pressure goal. Talk about any problems you are having managing your blood pressure. It's OK to ask for help.



Use Technology

There are numerous mobile applications (apps) that can record your blood pressure and report it to your health care team. Ask if this option is available to you.

For more information, review these related flyers:

- Focus on Walking
- Lifesaving Tips About ... Foot Care and PAD
- Lifesaving Tips About ... Managing Diabetes and PAD
- Lifesaving Tips About ... Smoking and PAD
- What Is Peripheral Artery Disease?

TIPS FOR TRIMMING YOUR SALT INTAKE

- When cooking or at the table, avoid using salt to add flavor to your food. Try herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends.
- If your budget allows it, cook with fresh poultry, fish, and lean meats. Canned or processed meats (deli meats or cold cuts) have very high salt content.
- Buy fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables that have no salt added.
- When you use canned foods, drain and rinse them at least once to reduce the sodium.
- Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals with herbs or spices rather than salt. Cut back on instant or flavored versions of these items, which often contain added salt.
- For snacks, choose unsalted nuts, fresh fruits, or low-sodium pretzels or crackers.
- Many carbonated beverages, even diet ones, contain sodium. Read labels carefully and replace these beverages with water when possible.
- Most condiments, such as ketchup, have a high salt content. Limit their use when enjoying your meal.

My Lifesaving High Blood Pressure Control Plan

Three reasons I want to control my high blood pressure are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are the three things I can do today to help control my blood pressure?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Use the chart below to write down your blood pressure goal and latest results.

BLOOD PRESSURE	
My Blood Pressure Goal: _____	
My Results	Date

Questions for Your Doctor



It is important to work closely with your health care provider about your diagnosis and treatment. You can bring this form with you to help talk to your medical provider about any questions and concerns you may have.

