

High blood pressure

High blood pressure (also called hypertension) can lead to serious problems like heart attacks or strokes. But lifestyle changes and blood pressure medicines can help you stay healthy.

Symptoms of high blood pressure

High blood pressure does not usually cause any symptoms.

Many people have it without realising it.

Rarely, high blood pressure can cause symptoms such as:

- headaches
- blurred vision
- chest pain

But the only way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to get your blood pressure checked.

Risks of having high blood pressure

If your blood pressure is too high, it puts extra strain on your blood vessels, heart and other organs, such as your brain, kidneys and eyes.

If it's not treated, it can increase your risk of serious conditions such as:

- [heart disease](#)
- [heart attacks](#)
- [strokes](#)
- [heart failure](#)
- [kidney disease](#)
- [vascular dementia](#)

Lowering your blood pressure even a small amount can help reduce your risk of these problems.

How you can help lower your blood pressure

Healthy lifestyle changes can help lower your blood pressure.

Do

have a healthy, balanced diet

exercise regularly – aim to do at least 150 minutes of exercise a week

lose weight if you're overweight

Don't

do not eat too much salt – avoid salty food or adding salt to your meals

do not drink too much alcohol – avoid drinking more than 14 alcohol units a week on a regular basis

do not drink too much caffeine – drinks high in caffeine include coffee, tea and cola

do not smoke

What are the risk factors for high blood pressure?

Nearly one-third of all Americans have high blood pressure, but it is particularly prevalent in:

People who have diabetes, gout, or kidney disease

African Americans (particularly those who live in the southeastern U.S.)

People in their early to middle adult years; men in this age group have higher blood pressure more often than women in this age group

People in their middle to later adult years; women in this age group have higher blood pressure more often than men in this age group (more women have high blood pressure after menopause than men of the same age)

Middle-aged and elderly people; more than half of all Americans age 60 and older have high blood pressure

People with a family history of high blood pressure

People consuming a high salt diet

Overweight people

Heavy drinkers of alcohol

Women who are taking oral contraceptives

People with depression

How does blood pressure increase?

The following conditions contribute to high blood pressure:

Being overweight

Excessive sodium intake

A lack of exercise and physical activity

How is high blood pressure controlled?

These steps can help you control your blood pressure:

Take prescribed medicine exactly as directed by your healthcare provider

Choose foods that are low in sodium (salt)

Choose foods low in calories and fat

Choose foods high in fiber

Maintain a healthy weight, or losing weight if overweight

Limit serving sizes

Increase physical activity

Reduce or omit alcoholic beverages

Sometimes daily medicine is needed to control high blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure, have your blood pressure checked routinely and see your healthcare provider to monitor the condition.