

Steps to Lower Your Blood Pressure



- 1 Set targets.** Work with your doctor to set blood pressure numbers that are realistic for you.
- 2 Take control.** Start the DASH eating plan gradually, set activity goals, and eliminate unhealthy habits.
- 3 Work together.** Studies show that you have a better chance of staying motivated when you tackle healthy goals with friends and family.
- 4 Change gradually.** You don't have to make big changes all at once. Even small steps make you healthier and get you where you want to go.
- 5 Manage stress.** Over time, stress contributes to high blood pressure and other health issues. Practicing mindful meditation for even 10 minutes a day helps relieve stress.

The DASH eating plan along with other lifestyle changes can help you keep your blood pressure in a healthy range—whether you have high blood pressure or you're trying to prevent it.

BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS FOR ADULTS

Blood pressure is measured in units of millimeters of mercury (mmHg). The readings are always given in pairs, with the upper (systolic) value first, followed by the lower (diastolic) value.

Systolic pressure is the pressure when the ventricles pump blood out of the heart—when the heart beats.

Diastolic pressure is the pressure between heartbeats, when the heart is filling with blood. The diastolic pressure is always lower than the systolic pressure.

Overall blood pressure status is determined by the higher number. For example, if your systolic is in the normal range and your diastolic is in the high range, your overall blood pressure is considered high.

Healthy blood pressure for most adults is usually less than 120/80 mmHg.

High blood pressure is when you have consistent systolic readings of 140 mmHg or higher or diastolic readings of 90 mmHg or higher. Based on research, your doctor may also determine that you have high blood pressure if you consistently have systolic readings of 130 to 139 mmHg or diastolic readings of 80 to 89 mmHg and you have other risk factors for heart or blood vessel disease.

Note that readings above 180/120 mmHg are dangerously high and require immediate medical attention.