

# Blood pressure and diabetes:

lower the pressure, lower your risk

## What can I do to help keep my blood pressure low?

Lose weight if you are overweight.

Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

Stop smoking.

Eat foods that are low in sodium.

Be physically active after discussing it with your healthcare provider.

If prescribed, take your blood pressure medicines as directed.

People with diabetes may not think they need to be concerned about their heart health. In this case, what you don't know really *can* hurt you. Consider this:

- Almost 3 of every 4 people with diabetes have high blood pressure (BP) or take medications to treat it.
- People with high BP and diabetes double their risk of having a heart attack compared with people who have high BP without diabetes.
- 2 of every 3 people with diabetes will die of heart disease or stroke.

The good news is that there are ways to take control and stay healthy. By lowering your BP by just 10 points, you can lower your chance of heart attack by 11% and stroke by 18%.

## What is BP?

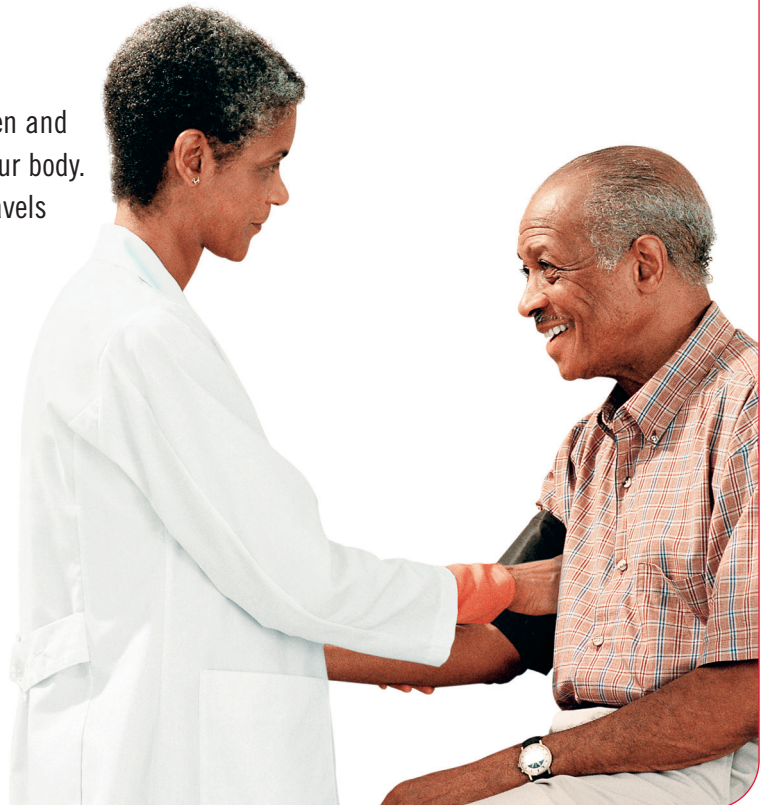
Your blood brings oxygen and food to every part of your body. To do this, the blood travels through blood vessels called arteries. The blood inside your arteries is like a flowing river that gathers speed and force as it travels. The force of your blood against the inside of your arteries is your BP. If your BP is high, it becomes like a raging river, pushing

against the banks with extra force. The extra force of the blood inside your arteries can cause problems.

## Why is high BP bad?

High BP can damage just about any part of your body but is very dangerous for your heart, your arteries, and your brain.

Your heart is the pump that gets blood into your arteries and gives it the push it needs to get moving. Healthy arteries expand to take in blood from the heart and contract to push the blood where it needs to go. But the force of high BP harms your arteries and makes them hard and narrow. Your heart needs to work harder to pump blood through the arteries.





**Remember, high BP is a serious problem for people with diabetes, but there is a lot you can do to help stay healthy.**

**Ask your healthcare provider if you need help controlling your BP and your blood sugar.**

**Blood pressure and diabetes: lower the pressure, lower your risk**

## How do I know if I have high BP?

The only way to know if you have high BP is to have it measured by a healthcare provider. Your BP is really 2 measures:

- **Systolic** (pronounced *sis-TOL-ik*) BP—the pressure in your arteries when your heart pumps out blood.
- **Diastolic** (pronounced *die-uh-STOL-ik*) BP—the pressure in your arteries when your heart relaxes between beats.

Your BP reading is written as a fraction—systolic pressure over diastolic pressure. For example, BP can be 120/80 mmHg (read as “120 over 80 millimeters of mercury”). You should have your BP measured at every visit to your healthcare provider.

## What is a healthy BP level for me?

Your healthcare provider will set a goal for you. Normal BP is less than 120/80 mmHg. Since this may not be a realistic goal, most patients with diabetes should aim for BP lower than 130/80 mmHg.

## What can I do to help keep my BP low?

There are many ways to lower your BP. Many of these are the same things that can help you control your blood sugar. These include:

- **Lose weight (if you are overweight)** — some people with high BP can get down to normal BP just by losing weight.
- **Limit the alcohol you drink** — that usually means no more than 1 drink a day for women or 2 drinks a day for men (or less, as directed by your healthcare provider).
- **Stop smoking.**
- **Eat foods that are low in sodium** — ask your healthcare provider for help choosing the right foods.
- **Be physically active** — after first talking to your healthcare provider. Most people with diabetes should aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise a day at least 5 days a week.
- **If prescribed, take your BP medicines as directed.**

Some medicines can raise your BP. These include birth control pills and cold medicines. If your BP is high, ask your healthcare provider if any of your medicines may be the cause. Always ask your healthcare provider before you stop taking any medicine.

**For more information, visit MerckSource™ at [www.mercksource.com](http://www.mercksource.com).**

MerckSource is a trademark of Merck & Co., Inc.

Where patients come first  **MERCK**

Copyright © 2006 Merck & Co., Inc.  
All rights reserved.

20607428(7)-11/06-HMS

Printed in USA  
Minimum 10% Recycled Paper ♻️