




Managing High Blood Pressure

 For Everyone
DECEMBER 13, 2024

KEY POINTS

- Measuring your blood pressure is an important step toward controlling high blood pressure.
- If you have diabetes, you may also have high blood pressure.
- Making health lifestyle choices, such as getting regular physical activity and not smoking, can help keep your blood pressure levels healthy.
- Work with your health care team to manage high blood pressure and related conditions.



Measuring your blood pressure on a regular basis

[Measuring your blood pressure](#) is an important step toward keeping a healthy blood pressure. High blood pressure often has no symptoms. Checking your blood pressure is the only way to know for sure whether it is too high.

If you learn that you have high blood pressure, you should take steps to control your blood pressure. This will lower your risk for heart disease and stroke.

If you are [pregnant or planning to become pregnant and have high blood pressure](#), talk with your health care team about ways you can keep you and your baby safe.

Managing related health conditions

Most people with [diabetes](#)—about 6 out of 10—also have high blood pressure.^[1] If your health care professional thinks you have symptoms of diabetes, he or she may recommend that you get tested.

If you have diabetes, it's important to stick to your treatment plan to keep your blood sugar (glucose) levels within the target range set by your doctor. [Living well with diabetes](#) also means taking your medicines as prescribed, eating well, and getting regular physical activity. These actions can also help reduce your risk for high blood pressure.

Having overweight or obesity means your heart must work harder to pump blood and oxygen around the body. [Staying at a healthy weight](#) reduces the stress on your heart and reduces your risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

People who have depression, anxiety, stress, or post-traumatic stress disorder over a long period of time [may develop other health problems](#), including an increased heart rate and high blood pressure.

Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders and [heart disease](#). Talk with your health care team about potential heart conditions in relation to your mental health.

Lifestyle changes

By making these lifestyle changes, you can help keep your blood pressure levels healthy.

- **Get regular physical activity.** Staying physically active is one of the best things you can do for your health. Physical activity helps keep your heart and blood vessels strong. It also can help you keep a healthy weight.

- **Do not smoke.** Smoking damages your blood vessels and greatly increases your risk of not only high blood pressure but also heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.
- **Eat healthy foods.** Choosing healthy meal and snack options can help you avoid high blood pressure and its complications. Be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- **Keep a healthy weight.** Having overweight or obesity means your heart must work harder to pump blood and oxygen around the body. Staying at a healthy weight reduces the stress on your heart and reduces your risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

Learn more about [preventing high blood pressure](#) and lowering risk for heart attack and stroke through healthy living habits.

Creating a care plan with your health care team

You and your health care team can work together to create a care plan for your high blood pressure and other conditions that can lead to high blood pressure. Discuss your treatment plan regularly and bring a list of questions to your appointments.

Taking medicine

Many people need to take medicine in addition to making lifestyle changes to help keep their blood pressure at healthy levels. Your health care team may prescribe you one of many kinds of blood pressure medicines.

High blood pressure medicines are classified in the following groups:

- Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors
- Angiotensin II receptor blockers
- Beta-blockers
- Calcium channel blockers
- Centrally-acting alpha adrenergics
- Combination medicines
- Diuretics, also called "water pills"
- Peripherally acting alpha-adrenergic blockers
- Renin inhibitors
- Vasodilators
- For the latest information about each type of blood pressure medicine, visit the [U.S. Food & and Drug Administration \(FDA\) high blood pressure webpage](#) [↗](#).

How do blood pressure medicines work?

Blood pressure medicines can work several different ways. Blood pressure medicines can keep blood pressure at a healthy level by: [\[2\]](#)

- Causing your body to get rid of water, which decreases the amount of water and salt in your body to a healthy level
- Relaxing your blood vessels
- Making your heart beat with less force
- Blocking nerve activity that can restrict your blood vessels

Talk with your health care team about the best type of treatment for you. You may need to take more than one type of medicine to control your blood pressure. You can also talk to your health care team about how long it should take your blood pressure medicine to work.

It is important to take your blood pressure medicine exactly as your doctor tells you to. Do not stop taking your current medicine without talking to your doctor or pharmacist first. Stopping your blood pressure medicine without first talking to your health care team could lead to serious health consequences.

What are the benefits and risks of blood pressure medicines?

The benefits of blood pressure medicines are clear: Blood pressure medicines can help you keep your blood pressure at healthy levels and therefore greatly reduce your risk of [heart disease](#), [heart attack](#), and [stroke](#).

All medicines have risks. Talk with your doctor about the best blood pressure medicines for you, their benefits, risks, and side effects, and any other health problems you may have.

Do not stop taking your current medicine without talking to your doctor or health care professional first.

What are the side effects of blood pressure medicines?

Most of the time, blood pressure medicines do not cause side effects. Some people have mild side effects, including dizziness, headaches, swelling in the legs or feet, or stomach problems.[\[3\]](#)

Some over-the-counter medicines, such as nasal decongestants, can also raise blood pressure and interact with blood pressure medicines.[\[4\]](#) Tell your doctor about any medicines or supplements you are already taking.

How do I know if I need medicine for high blood pressure?

Your health care team will tell you if you need medicine for high blood pressure, based on your blood pressure readings over a period of time. If you use a home blood pressure monitor, record or write down your readings.

Share your readings with your health care team so that you can make the best decision to manage your blood pressure together.

Resources

CDC

- [Preventing High Blood Pressure](#)

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)






- [High Blood Pressure—Medicines to Help You](#) 
- [High Blood Pressure](#) 

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; About the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention

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