




# About High Blood Pressure

 For Everyone  
JANUARY 28, 2025

KEY POINTS

- High blood pressure (hypertension) is consistently at or above 130/80 mm Hg.
- High blood pressure typically has no signs or symptoms but can cause problems for your heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes.
- No matter your age, you can take steps each day to keep your blood pressure in a healthy range.
- Some people may be able to control their blood pressure by making lifestyle changes or taking blood pressure medicines.

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## Definition of high blood pressure

Blood pressure is the pressure that occurs when blood pushes against the walls of your arteries. Arteries carry blood from your heart to other parts of your body.

Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg.[\[1\]](#)

High blood pressure, also called **hypertension**, is blood pressure that is higher than normal.

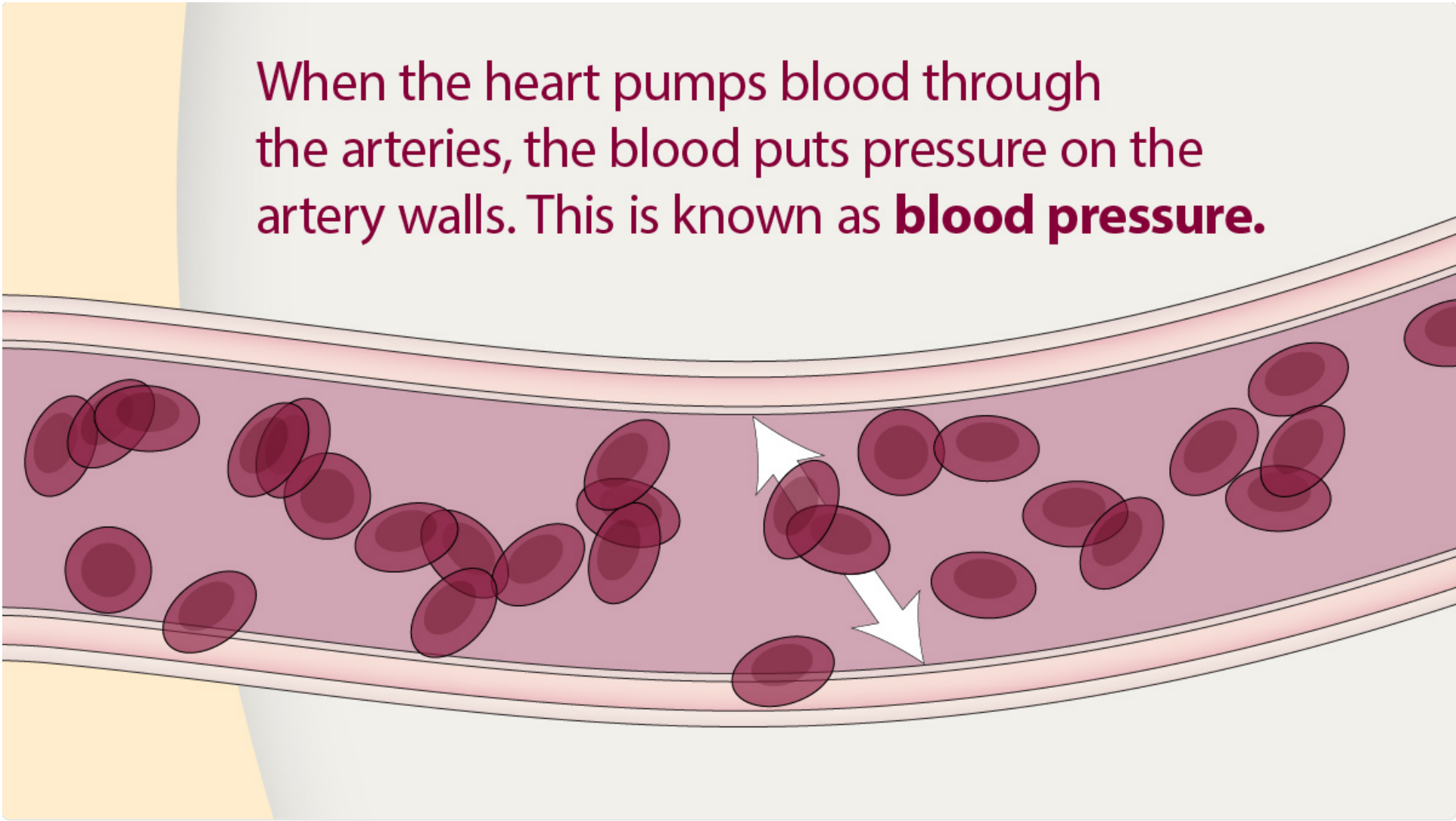
High blood pressure is consistently at or above 130/80 mm Hg.[\[1\]](#)

Your blood pressure changes throughout the day based on your activities. Having blood pressure consistently above normal may result in a diagnosis of high blood pressure.

The higher your blood pressure levels, the more risk you have for other health problems, such as [heart disease](#), [heart attack](#), and [stroke](#).

Learn about how you can prevent and treat [high blood pressure during pregnancy](#), which can put you and your baby at risk for health problems.






When the heart pumps blood through the arteries, the blood puts pressure on the artery walls. This is called blood pressure.


Diagnosis

Your health care team can diagnose high blood pressure. They can also make treatment decisions by reviewing your systolic (first number) and diastolic (second number) blood pressure levels and comparing them to guidelines.

Most health care professionals will use these guidelines from the ACC and AHA to diagnose high blood pressure:[\[1\]](#)



<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (Hypertension)</b> <b>Systolic:</b> 130 mm Hg or higher <b>or</b> <b>Diastolic:</b> 80 mm Hg or higher
<b>ELEVATED BLOOD PRESSURE</b> <b>Systolic:</b> 120–129 mm Hg <b>and</b> <b>Diastolic:</b> less than 80 mm Hg
<b>NORMAL BLOOD PRESSURE</b> <b>Systolic:</b> less than 120 mm Hg <b>and</b> <b>Diastolic:</b> less than 80 mm Hg



An illustration of a stoplight to correlate the three levels of blood pressure with the colors of the stoplight where red is HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (Hypertension): Systolic is 130 mm Hg or higher or Diastolic is 80 mm Hg or higher. Yellow colored light ...  
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If a health care professional diagnoses you with high blood pressure, talk with your health care team about your blood pressure levels and how they affect your treatment plan.

Learn how and where to [measure your blood pressure](#) and why it's important to know your numbers.

## Signs and symptoms

High blood pressure usually has no warning signs or symptoms, and many people do not know they have it. [Measuring your blood pressure](#) is the only way to know whether you have high blood pressure.

## Causes

There are several causes of and [risk factors for high blood pressure](#). Fortunately, you can control many of them.

High blood pressure usually develops over time. It can occur because of unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as not getting enough regular physical activity.

[Certain health conditions](#), such as diabetes and obesity, can also increase the risk for developing high blood pressure. And high blood pressure can [occur during pregnancy](#).

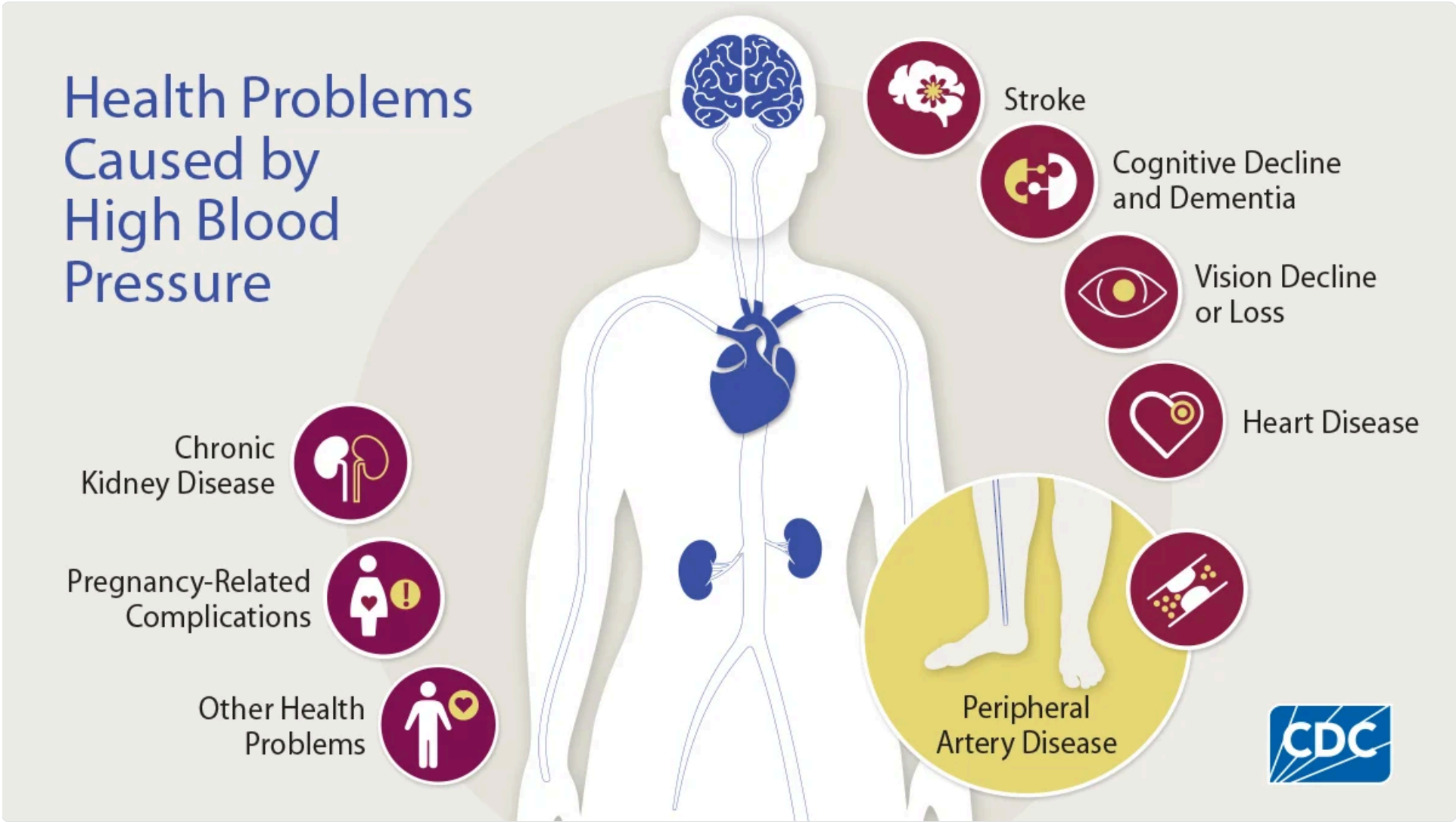
People who have depression, anxiety, stress, or post-traumatic stress disorder over a long period of time [may develop other health problems](#), including an increased heart rate and high blood pressure.

Other risk factors, such as family history and the environment, can also increase a person's risk for high blood pressure.

## Potential problems having high blood pressure could cause

High blood pressure can damage your health in many ways. It can seriously hurt important organs like your heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes.

The good news is that, in most cases, you can manage your blood pressure to lower your risk for serious health problems.



An Illustration of Health Problems Caused by High Blood Pressure. A line drawing of the human body with the focus on the brain, heart and the kidneys. Surrounding the body are icons paired with the following text: Chronic Kidney Disease, Pregnancy-Related Complications, Other Health Problems, Stroke, Cognitive Decline and Dementia, Vision Decline or Loss, Heart Disease, and Peripheral Artery Disease.

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- High blood pressure (hypertension) complications can damage your health in many ways, including harming organs such as your heart, brain, and kidneys.

### Heart attack and heart disease

High blood pressure can damage your arteries by making them less elastic. This decreases the flow of blood and oxygen to your heart and leads to [heart disease](#). In addition, decreased blood flow to the heart can cause:

- Chest pain, also called angina.
- [Heart attack](#), which happens when the blood supply to your heart is blocked and heart muscle begins to die without enough oxygen. The longer the blood flow is blocked, the greater the damage to the heart.
- [Heart failure](#), a condition that means your heart can't pump enough blood and oxygen to your other organs.

## Stroke and brain problems

High blood pressure can cause the arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the brain to burst or be blocked, causing a [stroke](#). Brain cells die during a stroke because they do not get enough oxygen. Stroke can cause serious disabilities in speech, movement, and other basic activities. A stroke can cause death.

Having high blood pressure, especially in midlife, is linked to having poorer cognitive function and dementia later in life. Learn more about the link between high blood pressure and dementia from the National Institutes of Health's [Mind Your Risks](#)<sup>®</sup> [↗](#) campaign.

## Heart valve disease

High blood pressure can cause [heart valve disease](#), which is when any valve in the heart is damaged or diseased.

## Kidney disease

Adults with diabetes, high blood pressure, or both have a higher risk of developing chronic kidney disease than those without these conditions.

# Prevention

No matter your age, you can take steps each day to keep your [blood pressure in a healthy range](#).

Many people with high blood pressure can lower their blood pressure into a healthy range or keep their numbers in a healthy range by making [lifestyle changes](#). Talk with your health care team about:

- Physical activity each week (about 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week)
- Not smoking
- Eating a healthy diet, including limiting sodium (salt) and alcohol
- Keeping a healthy weight
- Managing stress

KEEP READING:  
[Managing High Blood Pressure](#)

In addition to making positive lifestyle changes, some people with high blood pressure need to [take medicine](#) to manage their blood pressure.

Talk with your health care team right away if:

- You think you have high blood pressure.
- If you've been told you have high blood pressure but do not have it under control.

By taking action to lower your blood pressure, you can help protect yourself against heart disease and stroke, also called cardiovascular disease (CVD).

KEEP READING:  
[Preventing High Blood Pressure](#)

### SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:  
[National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; About the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention](#)

### REFERENCES

1. Whelton PK, Carey RM, Aronow, WS, et al. 2017 ACC/AHA/AAPA/ABC/ACPM/AGS/APhA/ASH/ASPC/NMA/PCNA guideline for the prevention, detection, evaluation, and management of high blood pressure in adults: a report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Clinical Practice Guidelines. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2018;71(19):e127–e248.