

## Blood Pressure Readings

We've all heard that keeping blood pressure readings within a normal range is better for us, but just what does this mean? According to the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute ([www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)), nearly one in three adults in America has high blood pressure, which is commonly referred to as the "silent killer" because the onset of symptoms can be very insidious. Frequent headaches may develop or ringing in the ears may occur, but the only sure way to tell is to check your blood pressure often, or as recommended by your health care provider. In some cases diagnosis may not be made until other issues have developed. Undiagnosed hypertension can increase chances of stroke, heart attack, and kidney problems, all of which can be avoided if symptoms are recognized early and initiation of treatment immediately following.

Once the diagnosis of hypertension has been made, it usually lasts a lifetime. According to various online sources, blood pressure readings consistently over 140/90 are considered to be high, meaning that the heart is working harder to pump blood throughout body's main arteries. The blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the walls of the arteries, and the greater the force throughout time, the greater the likelihood of weakening blood vessels leading to increased cardiovascular risk. Blood pressure naturally fluctuates throughout the day; it is lowest during sleeping hours and rises upon awakening. Normal blood pressure readings are below 120/80, and pre-hypertension is considered to be consistent systolic (upper) readings between 120 and 129, and diastolic (lower) readings between 80 and 89.

Treatment for high blood pressure usually consists of the use of various medications, known as anti-hypertensives that work in different ways to lower blood pressure readings. Life style modifications can naturally lower blood pressure; increasing levels of physical activity to at least thirty minutes a day, avoiding stress, quitting smoking, limiting alcohol intake, decreasing salt intake in the diet, and practicing meditation are all proven ways to fight high blood pressure. When these interventions are combined they work to lower blood pressure readings to normal values, and decrease risk of organ damage. To learn all you need to know about blood pressure with answers to all your questions and more, visit [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com) or [www.heartcenteronline.com](http://www.heartcenteronline.com). Find out what symptoms to watch out for and how to decrease your chances of developing high blood pressure and beat the silent killer.