

Taking the Squeeze out of Blood Pressure

Choose
HEALTH!

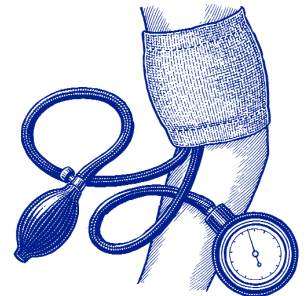


High blood pressure (B/P), also known as hypertension, is called the “silent killer” because it can be present and doing damage to the body without any symptoms. About one in four adults in this country have high blood pressure and many of them do not know it or do not have it under control.

Plain and simple, having untreated or poorly treated high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure, kidney disease, blindness and other health problems.

Your blood pressure is recorded as two numbers. Systolic B/P is the first number and represents the pressure on the arteries when the heart beats. Diastolic B/P is the second number and represents the pressure on the arteries while the heart is at rest. You cannot tell your blood pressure by how you look or feel. You must have it checked to know your numbers and your risk.

Categories of Blood Pressure			
Category	Systolic		Diastolic
Normal	Below 120	and	Below 80
Prehypertension	120-139	or	80-89
Hypertension, Stage 1	140-159	or	90-99
Hypertension, stage2	160 or above	or	100 or above



Lowering your blood pressure.

Your healthcare provider will set a goal for your blood pressure using national standards. Depending on your blood pressure reading and your other health risks, you may need to take medicine to reach that goal. People who already have diabetes or kidney disease will have different goals than the general public. The category Prehypertension is part of the new guidelines and was started because people with these readings tend to advance to higher blood pressure readings that need treatment with medicine if lifestyle changes are not begun as soon as possible. So it is very important to talk with your health care provider about what category you are in and the best treatment for you.

One thing is for sure; we all can benefit from healthy habits that will not only help reduce our blood pressure but also may help reduce our risks for other diseases like diabetes, stroke, heart disease, and certain cancers as well. The following is a list of lifestyle changes that can help control hypertension. **Another tip:** Changing too much at once can lead to frustration and failure. The key to making change that sticks is to choose only one or two healthy habits and work toward the goal of a healthier you!

Letting down the pressure:

Stop Smoking

Smoking is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States.

Get physical

Physical activity can help lower your blood pressure. It helps with weight control and stress reduction, too. Find an activity that you enjoy and get started today. The goal is to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. If you cannot get it in all at once, it is better to do it in ten minute intervals than not at all. Something as simple as walking is a good way to get started.

Eat healthy

Use less salt and caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant and can increase your blood pressure and heart rate. If you must use alcohol, do so in moderation. A man should not drink more than two alcoholic drinks per day. Woman and those who are lighter in weight should limit their alcohol intake to one or less drinks per day. Calcium, Magnesium, and Potassium are all nutrients that have been shown to play a role in blood pressure control. Be certain your diet is rich in these substances.

Control your weight

Being overweight, and over 60% of Americans are, puts an extra burden on many of your body's systems. Many times a weight loss of only 5-10 pounds can make a difference in lowering blood pressure in those that are overweight.

Change your perception

Although we cannot always change what life deals out to us, we can change how we react. Using easy stress management techniques can prevent increases in your blood pressure during stressful situations. Try to find something positive in every person and situation. Take in a few good deep breaths and see how this simple action can help calm and soothe you.

Take your Medicine

Whether you are already taking medicine or just starting to use it for high blood pressure control make sure you are faithful to take it as instructed by your healthcare provider.

Call your healthcare provider for further information about your risk for high blood pressure. Need more suggestions for a healthier lifestyle? OSF Saint Francis Wellness Services is here to help! Call us at (309) 282-1624 or visit our web site at: osfsaintfrancis.org/services/wellness

Choose Wisely, *CHOOSE* HEALTH!