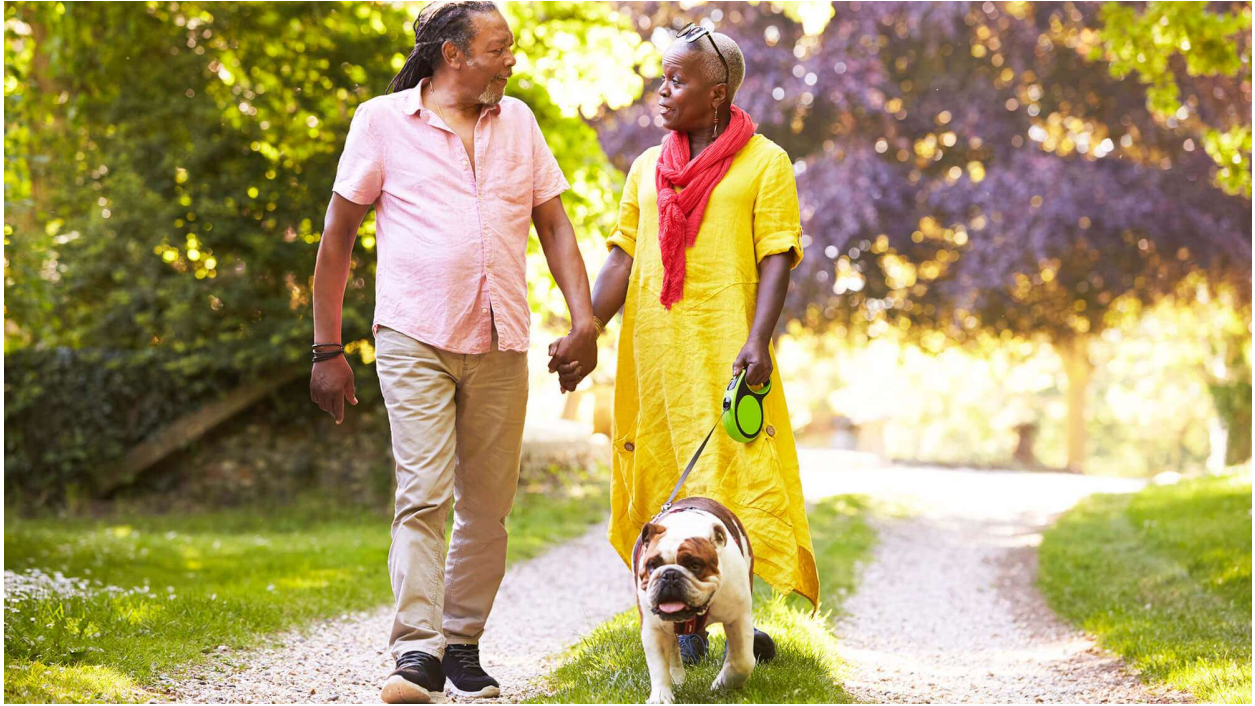


# Why High Blood Pressure is a "Silent Killer"



## High blood pressure is often called the “silent killer”

Most of the time, high blood pressure, or hypertension, has no obvious symptoms to indicate that something is wrong. The best ways to protect yourself are being aware of the risks and making changes that matter.

A few facts to be aware of:

- Many people with high blood pressure don't even know they have it. Often the signs and symptoms are misunderstood.
- High blood pressure develops slowly over time and can be related to many causes.
- High blood pressure cannot be cured. But it can be managed effectively through lifestyle changes and, when needed, medication.

## Recognize your risks

Be aware of your risk factors – the physical and lifestyle attributes that can make you more likely to develop high blood pressure.

Awareness of your risks can help you identify positive changes that you can make. Do all you can to avoid the serious problems that can result from your blood pressure being too high for too long.

# Understanding Blood Pressure Readings

## What do your blood pressure numbers mean?

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is to have your blood pressure tested. Understanding your results is key to controlling high blood pressure.

## Healthy and unhealthy blood pressure ranges

Learn what is considered normal, as recommended by the American Heart Association.

<b>BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY</b>	<b>SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)</b>	<b>and/or</b>	<b>DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)</b>
<b>NORMAL</b>	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
<b>ELEVATED</b>	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1</b>	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2</b>	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
<b><u>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS</u> (consult your doctor immediately)</b>	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

Note: A diagnosis of high blood pressure must be confirmed by a medical professional. A health care professional should also evaluate any unusually low blood pressure readings.

## Blood pressure categories

The five blood pressure ranges as recognized by the American Heart Association are:

### Normal

Blood pressure numbers of less than 120/80 mm Hg (millimeters of mercury) are considered within the normal range. If your results fall into this category, stick with heart-healthy habits like following a balanced diet and getting regular exercise.

## Elevated

Elevated blood pressure is when readings consistently range from 120-129 systolic and less than 80 mm Hg diastolic. People with elevated blood pressure are likely to develop high blood pressure unless steps are taken to control the condition.

## Hypertension Stage 1

Hypertension Stage 1 is when blood pressure consistently ranges from 130 to 139 systolic or 80 to 89 mm Hg diastolic. At this stage of high blood pressure, health care professionals are likely to prescribe lifestyle changes and may consider adding blood pressure medication based on your risk of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, or ASCVD, such as heart attack or stroke.

## Hypertension Stage 2

Hypertension Stage 2 is when blood pressure consistently is 140/90 mm Hg or higher. At this stage of high blood pressure, health care professionals are likely to prescribe a combination of blood pressure medications and lifestyle changes.

## Hypertensive crisis

This stage of high blood pressure requires medical attention. If your blood pressure readings suddenly exceed 180/120 mm Hg, wait five minutes and then test your blood pressure again. If your readings are still unusually high, contact your health care professional immediately. You could be experiencing a hypertensive crisis.

If your blood pressure is higher than 180/120 mm Hg or you are experiencing signs of possible organ damage such as chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness/weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking, do not wait to see if your pressure comes down on its own. **Call 911.**

## Your blood pressure numbers and what they mean

Your blood pressure is recorded as two numbers:

- **Systolic blood pressure** (the first number) – indicates how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls when the heart contracts.

- **Diastolic blood pressure** (the second number) – indicates how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls while the heart muscle is resting between contractions.

## Which number is more important?

Typically, more attention is given to systolic blood pressure (the first number) as a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease for people over 50. In most people, systolic blood pressure rises steadily with age due to the increasing stiffness of large arteries, long-term buildup of plaque and an increased incidence of cardiac and vascular disease.

However, either an elevated systolic or an elevated diastolic blood pressure reading may be used to make a diagnosis of high blood pressure.

## Make changes that matter:

- Eat a well-balanced diet that's low in salt
- Limit alcohol
- Enjoy regular physical activity
- Manage stress
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Quit smoking
- Take your medications properly
- Work together with your health care professional

## Managing blood pressure is a lifelong commitment.

If you have high blood pressure, it's vital that you listen to your health care professional. Remember: You're a part of your health care team. You and your health care professional are partners.

Educate yourself about HBP and learn how to monitor your blood pressure at home. Armed with this information, you can commit to living heart healthy.

By adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle, you can:

- Reduce high blood pressure.
- Prevent or delay the development of high blood pressure.
- Enhance the effectiveness of blood pressure medications.
- Lower your risk of heart attack, stroke, heart failure, kidney damage, vision loss and sexual dysfunction.