



# Blood Pressure

## WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure measures how hard the blood pushes against the walls of your blood vessels. This force is recorded as two numbers. The systolic number is recorded on top and the diastolic number is on the bottom. A blood pressure measurement of 120/80 is expressed as “120 over 80.”

### BLOOD PRESSURE NUMBERS

CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC		DIASTOLIC
Desirable	less than 120	AND	less than 80
Elevated	120-129	AND	less than 80
High	130-159	OR	80-99
Very High	160 or higher	OR	100 or higher



## WHO IS AT RISK FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

High blood pressure is more likely in people who:

- Have a family history of high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes
- Are African-American
- Have an unhealthy diet, especially one high in sodium
- Are overweight or obese
- Are not physically active
- Drink alcohol excessively

## WHAT DO THE NUMBERS MEAN?

The systolic pressure measures the force of the blood as the heart beats. The diastolic pressure measures this same force while the heart relaxes between beats. Both measurements are important.

Your blood pressure should be less than 120 systolic and less than 80 diastolic. If your blood pressure is elevated high or very high most of the time it can damage healthy arteries and lead to heart disease and stroke. It can also cause damage to your eyes and kidneys.

Blood pressure goals may vary depending on your age and other health problems. Talk to your health care provider to discuss your individual goal and risk.



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## What steps can I take to prevent and control elevated or high blood pressure?

### LIMIT SODIUM (SALT) INTAKE

Limit the amount of sodium in your diet to no more than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day. If you have high blood pressure you should limit your sodium to less than 1,500 mg per day. Check food labels and look for foods low in sodium (140mg or less of sodium per serving).



### LOSE WEIGHT IF YOU ARE OVERWEIGHT

Blood pressure often increases as weight increases. In some cases losing just 10 pounds can help lower blood pressure.

### STAY ACTIVE!

Aim to get a total of at least 30 minutes of activity most days of the week.

### HAVE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKED AT EVERY OFFICE VISIT

Most people have no symptoms so the only way to know blood pressure is elevated or high is by monitoring it.

Talk to your health care provider about your blood pressure goals and risk factors. If you need medicine to lower your blood pressure take your medicine as prescribed even if you feel well.

For a new twist on salsa try this low sodium recipe!

## Watermelon & Strawberry Salsa

### INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup diced watermelon
- ½ cup diced strawberries
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- 1 teaspoon grated lime zest
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 teaspoons honey

### INSTRUCTIONS

In a small bowl, stir together all the ingredients. Serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to two days.

Serve at room temperature or chilled with no-salt-added baked tortilla chips.



For more information visit [www.harvardpilgrim.org](http://www.harvardpilgrim.org)