

# Understanding Blood Pressure

Every time your heart beats, it creates pressure on the walls of your blood vessels. If the force of this pumping is too high, it wears out the arteries over time. Persistent high blood pressure is a risk factor for heart disease and can lead to heart attack and heart failure, stroke, kidney failure and other chronic conditions.

## Blood pressure measures the results of two forces:

### Systolic Pressure

The force in the arteries as the blood pumps out of the heart – should be 120 mmHg or less.

### Diastolic Pressure

The force in the arteries as the heart rests between beats – should be 80 mmHg or less.

Your blood pressure measurement is the systolic rate over the diastolic rate.

Normal blood pressure is 120/80 mmHg or lower.

Unfortunately, high blood pressure often has few symptoms. Check your blood pressure regularly so you can spot and treat high blood pressure before it causes long-term damage.

## Blood Pressure Categories

If your blood pressure reading is higher than 180/100, take it again. If it's still this high, seek immediate medical treatment.

### Normal

< 120 / < 80 mmHg

### Elevated

120 – 139 / < 80 mmHg

### High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1

130 – 139 / 80 – 89 mmHg

### High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2

140 or higher / 90 or higher mmHg

### Hypertensive Crisis

> 180 / >120 mmHg

## Steps to Improve Blood Pressure



### Weight Reduction:

Maintain healthy body weight



### DASH Eating Plan:

Diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low fat dairy products, and low in saturated and total fat



### Restrict Sodium:

Optimal goal is less than 1500 mg of sodium per day. Most adults should aim for reducing their daily intake by at least 1000 mg.



### Physical Activity:

Aerobic exercise at least 90-150 minutes per week



### Moderate Alcohol:

No more than 2 drinks per day for men, No more than 1 drink per day for women

