

# High Blood Pressure: Care Instructions

## Your Care Instructions

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If your blood pressure is usually above 140/90, you have high blood pressure, or hypertension. Despite what a lot of people think, high blood pressure usually doesn't cause headaches or make you feel dizzy or lightheaded. It usually has no symptoms. But it does increase your risk for heart attack, stroke, and kidney or eye damage. The higher your blood pressure, the more your risk increases.

Your doctor will give you a goal for your blood pressure. Your goal will be based on your health and your age. An example of a goal is to keep your blood pressure below 140/90.

Lifestyle changes, such as eating healthy and being active, are always important to help lower blood pressure. You might also take medicine to reach your blood pressure goal.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

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### Medical treatment

- If you stop taking your medicine, your blood pressure will go back up. You may take one or more types of medicine to lower your blood pressure. Be safe with medicines. Take your medicine exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Your doctor may suggest that you take one low-dose aspirin (81 mg) a day. This can help reduce your risk of having a stroke or heart attack.
- See your doctor regularly. You may need to see the doctor more often at first or until your blood pressure comes down.
- If you are taking blood pressure medicine, talk to your doctor before you take decongestants or anti-inflammatory medicine, such as ibuprofen. Some of these medicines can raise blood pressure.
- Learn how to check your blood pressure at home.

### Lifestyle changes

- Stay at a healthy weight. This is especially important if you put on weight around the waist. Losing even 10 pounds can help you lower your blood pressure.
- If your doctor recommends it, get more exercise. Walking is a good choice. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk every day. Try for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. You also may want to swim, bike, or do other activities.
- Avoid or limit alcohol. Talk to your doctor about whether you can drink any alcohol.
- Try to limit how much sodium you eat to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) a day. Your doctor may ask you to try to eat less than 1,500 mg a day.

- Eat plenty of fruits (such as bananas and oranges), vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.
- Lower the amount of saturated fat in your diet. Saturated fat is found in animal products such as milk, cheese, and meat. Limiting these foods may help you lose weight and also lower your risk for heart disease.
- Do not smoke. Smoking increases your risk for heart attack and stroke. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

## When should you call for help?

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**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your blood pressure is much higher than normal (such as 180/110 or higher).
- You think high blood pressure is causing symptoms such as:
  - Severe headache.
  - Blurry vision.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.



### Where can you learn more?

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Go to <http://www.healthwise.net/ed>

Enter **X567** in the search box to learn more about "**High Blood Pressure: Care Instructions**".

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