

A HOW-TO GUIDE

# Managing Your High Blood Pressure

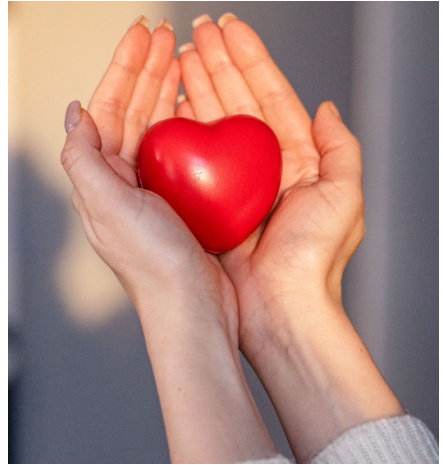


A Guide to Lowering Your Numbers and  
Improving Your Health

# Introduction

If you've been diagnosed with high blood pressure, **you may be feeling overwhelmed** or scared. It's completely understandable to feel this way, but please know that you're not alone. High blood pressure is a **common condition that affects millions of people** around the world.

While it can lead to serious health complications if left untreated, the good news is that there are **many ways to manage it and improve your health**.



This brochure is designed to provide you with the **information you need to manage your high blood pressure** and improve your overall well-being.

We know that managing a chronic condition can be challenging, but we believe that with the **right tools and resources**, you can take control of your health and live your best life.

We encourage you to take the time to read through this brochure, ask questions, and reach out for support when you need it.

Remember, you are not alone, and there are people who care about you and want to help you succeed!

CHAPTER I

# Understanding High Blood Pressure

## What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the **force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries** as your heart pumps. High blood pressure occurs when this force is consistently too high.

Blood pressure is measured with two numbers: **systolic (the top number) and diastolic (the bottom number)**.

A normal blood pressure reading is less than 120/80 mmHg.

**High blood pressure** is defined as a reading of **130/80 mmHg or higher**.

CHAPTER II

# Lifestyle Changes for Managing High Blood Pressure

**Making lifestyle changes is a critical part of managing high blood pressure.**

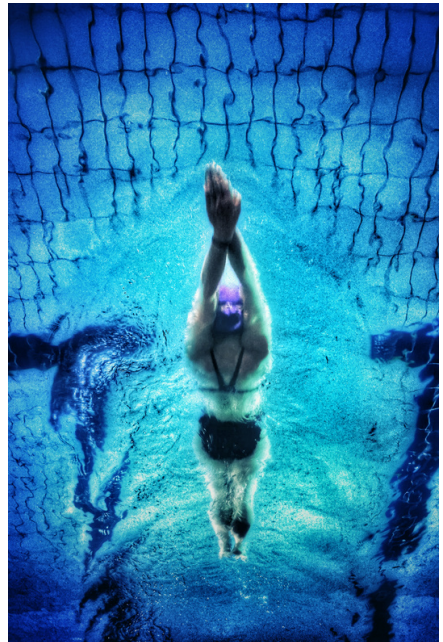
While medication can be effective, it's not a cure, and lifestyle changes are essential to help reduce your blood pressure and improve your overall health. The good news is that there are many lifestyle changes you can make that can have a significant impact on your blood pressure.

Dietary changes, exercise, stress management, quitting smoking, and limiting alcohol consumption are all key lifestyle changes that can help manage high blood pressure.

**These lifestyle changes are not just about lowering your blood pressure.**

They are also about improving your overall health and reducing your risk of other health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

Adjusting your lifestyle means investing in your health and well-being for the long term.



## CHAPTER II

# Lifestyle Changes

**Stop smoking**

Nicotine in cigarettes can cause blood vessels to narrow, making it harder for blood to flow through them. This can increase your blood pressure and make it more difficult to manage. Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health, and it can help lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of other health complications. If you're a smoker, talk to your healthcare provider about resources to help you quit, and consider reaching out for support from friends and family.

**Move your body**

Exercise helps to strengthen the heart and blood vessels, making them more efficient at pumping blood through the body. It can also help to reduce stress and improve overall cardiovascular health. When you engage in regular physical activity, your blood vessels become more flexible, which can help to lower your blood pressure. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise most days of the week, such as brisk walking, cycling, or swimming.

**Eat a DASH diet**

The DASH diet is a proven way to manage high blood pressure through dietary changes. Focus on eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. Limit your intake of red meat, sweets, and saturated fats. Choose foods that are low in sodium, and aim for less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day. Plan your meals and snacks in advance, and consider working with a registered dietitian to develop a personalized nutrition plan. Remember, small changes can add up over time, and adopting a healthy eating pattern can have long-lasting benefits for your health.

# DASH Diet

The DASH eating plan is a simple and effective way to manage high blood pressure through dietary changes.

It emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products while limiting red meat, sweets, and saturated fats. And, no, there are no specific "banned" foods, but there are recommendations on what you should focus on – and what to avoid.

## **Start by focusing on increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables.**

Aim for at least five servings per day of fruit and vegetables. Plant foods are high in fiber, which keeps you satiated for longer. For carbohydrates, choose whole grains, such as brown rice, quinoa, and whole wheat bread, instead of refined grains. Include lean sources of protein, such as chicken, fish, and legumes, and limit your intake of red meat.

Opt for low-fat dairy products, such as skim milk and low-fat yogurt, instead of full-fat versions. Reducing your saturated fat intake this way can help slow down plaque growth and improve your blood pressure control.

## **Aim for under 2,300 mg of sodium (or, better yet, 1,500 mg) daily.**

One of the key components of the DASH eating plan is to limit your sodium intake to no more than 2,300 milligrams per day, or even better, to 1,500 milligrams per day. When you consume too much sodium, it can cause your body to retain excess fluid, which can increase blood pressure.

By limiting your sodium intake, you can help to reduce the amount of fluid your body retains, which can help to lower your blood pressure. Did you know that most of the sodium we consume comes from processed and packaged foods? Keep your eye on those labels to make sure you're staying under 2300 mg per day.



CHAPTER III

# Medication Options for High Blood Pressure

**In addition to making lifestyle changes, you may need to take medications to control your blood pressure.**

There are several types of medications available that can help to lower blood pressure. It's important to work with your healthcare provider to determine the best medication option for you based on your individual needs and medical history.

The main groups of medications for high blood pressure include:

- **Diuretics:** These medications help to remove excess sodium and water from the body, which can help to lower blood pressure. You might urinate more frequently while on these medications. They might also deplete your potassium, which is a key mineral for muscle function. If you notice any muscle weakness, cramps, or twitching, talk to your doctor so they can look into your potassium levels.
- **ACE inhibitors:** These medications block the action of a hormone that can cause blood vessels to constrict, which can help to lower blood pressure. Their most common side effect is a dry cough. They are also not safe in pregnancy, so if you are having sex with someone who can get you pregnant, make sure to use contraception.

- **Calcium channel blockers:** These medications relax the blood vessels, which can help to lower blood pressure. Side effects may include headache, dizziness, flushing, and swelling in the legs.
- **Beta-blockers:** These medications block the effects of adrenaline, which can slow the heart rate and reduce blood pressure. Because they slow down your heart rate, you might feel tired and dizzy. Some people also have difficulty sleeping or nightmares. You might also have trouble getting an erection or experience other sex disturbances.

All medications can have side effects. If you are struggling to manage them, avoid cutting out the medication altogether – talk to your healthcare provider first. They may be able to adjust your medication or provide additional support to help manage any side effects.



CONCLUSION

# Resources and Support

Are you ready to take control of your blood pressure? Your healthcare provider is your best source of guidance on lifestyle changes and medication options. However, there are multiple high-quality resources you can refer to online, too. Empower yourself to take charge of your health and learn about managing your blood pressure from these resources:

- Visit the American Heart Association website (<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure>) for helpful information and tips on managing high blood pressure. You can also join the support network for people with cardiovascular conditions and their loved ones.
- Check out the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute website (<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/high-blood-pressure>) for even more concise and reader-friendly information about high blood pressure.
- Go to the USDA High Blood Pressure page (<https://www.nutrition.gov/topics/diet-and-health-conditions/high-blood-pressure>) to learn more about the dietary approach to lowering your blood pressure.





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