

Getting Started--Improve Your Blood Pressure

Your doctor has identified that you have hypertension or blood pressure higher than 120/80. High blood pressure alone has no symptoms, but makes your heart work harder. Untreated, high blood pressure leads to serious complications including heart failure, angina, heart attack, stroke, claudication and kidney failure.

You can prevent these complications by getting your blood pressure under control, first by managing lifestyle factors. If that is not enough, prescription medications are added to your care.

Lifestyle Changes to Lower Blood Pressure

TIP	ACTION	DROP in BLOOD PRESSURE* Diastolic/Systolic (e.g. 130 / 90)
Follow a DASH* Eating Plan	Increase the nutrient density of your diet, especially potassium, calcium, magnesium, fiber and phytochemicals.	↓ 11 / 6 points
Exercise Regularly	Do heartbeat raising activity such as brisk walking. Target at least 30-60 minutes per day, 4 to 7 days per week	↓ 10 / 8 points
Lose excess weight	For every 10 pounds you lose (especially around your waist)	↓ 7 / 6 points
Limit sodium/salt	Lower dietary sodium intake to a goal of 2300 mg per day	↓ 6 / 3 points
Limit alcohol	Maximum of 2 servings of alcohol per day with a weekly limit of 9 servings for women and 14 servings for men.	↓ 5 / 2 points
Quit Smoking	Develop & Execute a Quit Plan. www.smokershelpline.ca is a helpful support. (1-877-513-5333)	Each cigarette you smoke raises your blood pressure.

* Source: The 2007 Canadian Hypertension Education Program recommendations for the management of hypertension. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov. The effects on blood pressure are very individual and are based on the amount of change made in lifestyle and how long these changes have been made over time.

** DASH indicates "Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension." More information is available at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/

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