

Keep your blood pressure down

High blood pressure is a dangerous medical condition that increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. Thankfully, it's treatable, and for many people, it may be preventable.



What you eat influences the health of your heart and blood vessels. A balanced diet is essential to help prevent or manage blood pressure problems.

Limit the salt. Most people eat too much salt, often without realizing it. Salt is hidden in many processed and restaurant foods. Making food at home and choosing whole, unprocessed fresh foods will help you avoid the salt trap.

Watch out for:

- Breads and rolls
- Pizza
- Sandwiches
- Processed meats like bacon, sausage, and lunch meat
- Soups
- Burritos
- Salty snacks like popcorn, pretzels, and chips

Decrease saturated fat. Saturated fats are found in high-fat animal foods. If you eat animal products, choose lean cuts of meat or fish and low-fat or fat-free dairy.

Watch out for:

- Fatty cuts of red meat
- Bacon
- Sausage
- Butter
- Full-fat cheese and dairy products

Eat more plant foods. A diet high in whole, unprocessed plant foods lowers your risk of high blood pressure. Choose these foods more often.

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole grains such as brown rice, quinoa, oats, and whole wheat flour
- Beans and legumes
- Nuts and seeds

ACTIVITY

One of the best things you can do for your cardiovascular system is to get moving. Physical activity strengthens your heart and blood vessels and lowers your risk of high blood pressure.

- Aim for a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week. Moderate-intensity activities include brisk walking, biking, hiking, dancing, water aerobics, and tennis.
- Include muscle-strengthening activities 2 days a week. Target all the major muscle groups: legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms.
- Move more throughout the day and avoid long periods of sitting. Set a timer to remind you to get up and move every 30-50 minutes.

HEALTHY HABITS

- Quit smoking.
- Limit or avoid alcohol. The safe upper limit for alcohol intake is 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women and for those 65 and older.
- Get plenty of sleep. Adults need 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Regularly getting less than 7 hours of sleep a night increases your risk for high blood pressure.

