

# Take control of your blood pressure

Know your risk and what you can do about it



High blood pressure, or hypertension, can affect anyone, but people older than 35 are more likely to have it. You would also be at a higher risk if you are:

- African American.
- Pregnant, postmenopausal, or on birth control pills.
- Diagnosed with diabetes.
- Overweight or obese.
- A heavy drinker.
- A tobacco user.
- Eating foods high in salt or sodium and low in potassium.

High blood pressure can cause heart disease and stroke — leading causes of death for all Americans. High blood pressure is often called a silent killer because it has no obvious signs or symptoms. That is why it's so important to check your blood pressure regularly at home, at the pharmacy, or at your doctor's office. Talk to your doctor about your blood pressure and risk factors.

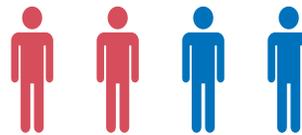
## How high blood pressure affects your body

Your blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries as your heart pumps it through your body. Over time, if the force is too great, your arteries can harden. Less blood and oxygen pass through hardened arteries. Eventually, high blood pressure can damage your heart, brain, and other organs.

## The risk is real

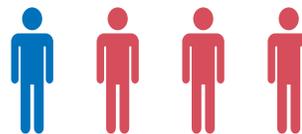
### Almost half of adults in the U.S.

have high blood pressure. That's approximately 108 million, or 45% of U.S. adults.



### Only about 1 in 4 adults

with hypertension have their condition under control.



## Controlling your blood pressure

Because high blood pressure is so common, it is important to pay attention to your numbers and to keep them low. Talk to your doctor about:

 How often to check your blood pressure.

 How much exercise you need each week.

 How to maintain a healthy weight.

 How much sodium is safe for you.

 If you currently use tobacco products, talk to your doctor about options to help you quit. You can also go to [smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov) for tips on quitting.

## Taking blood pressure medication

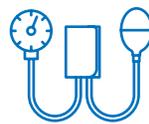
If your doctor prescribes blood pressure medication, be sure to take it exactly as prescribed.

It's also important to ask your doctor about any over-the-counter medications or supplements before taking them. Some cough, cold, or flu medicines can raise your blood pressure or interfere with your blood pressure medication, which can be very dangerous.

## What the numbers mean

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, normal blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg. Even if only one of the numbers is higher than it should be, you could have high blood pressure — or be at risk for it.

This reads “120 over 80.” The first number is the systolic. This number shows the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart beats.



**120** |

vessels when your heart beats.

**80** |

The second number is the diastolic. This number shows the pressure in your vessels when your heart rests between beats.

**Keeping your blood pressure under control can help minimize your risk for more serious health problems. Visit the American Heart Association at [heart.org](https://www.heart.org) for more information and tools, including a including a risk calculator for high blood pressure.**

### Sources:

American Heart Association: [heart.org](https://www.heart.org).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov/bloodpressure](https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure).

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute: [nhlbi.nih.gov](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov).

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