

Lifestyle Changes to Prevent and Manage High Blood Pressure



Just because you have high blood pressure, there is no reason to despair! High blood pressure is one of those chronic conditions that responds very well to lifestyle changes. And, believe it or not, these changes are things you *can* accomplish. Discuss your specific goals first with your health care team. Losing weight, exercising moderately and changing your diet can all make a big difference. Check out just how much of a difference on the chart below. And, if you smoke, make a plan to quit ASAP, with help from your health care professional.

Lifestyle Change	How	How Changes Can Affect Blood Pressure
Lose weight	Maintain a normal body weight with a body mass index between 18.5 and 24.9.	Every 22 pounds lost lowers blood pressure by 5–20 mm Hg.*
Change how you eat	Adopt a healthy eating program high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy, and low in saturated and total fat. This is called the DASH eating plan: Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension.	Healthy food choices can lower blood pressure by 8–14 mm Hg.
Cut back on salt	Limit sodium to no more than 2.4 grams a day—that’s only 1 teaspoon a day. An easy way to do it? Nix prepared and fast foods, which are often loaded with extra sodium.	Reducing sodium can lower blood pressure by 2–8 mm Hg.
Get off the couch	Add at least 30 minutes a day of aerobic activity such as brisk walking most days of the week.	Getting physically active can lower blood pressure by 4–9 mm Hg.
Limit alcohol	Stop at two drinks or less (for men) or one drink or less (for women). A drink is defined as 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of liquor.	Reducing alcohol intake can lower blood pressure by 2–4 mm Hg.

**mm Hg is the abbreviation for millimeters of mercury—the standard of measure for blood pressure.*

This information is part of the “Heart-to-Heart” campaign to encourage women and their health care professionals to talk about high blood pressure. The campaign is supported by an educational grant from Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation and is produced in partnership by the National Women’s Health Resource Center and WomenHeart, the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease.