


# Hypertension

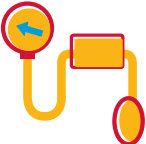
## What is hypertension and why does it matter?


Hypertension is also called high blood pressure and can damage your blood vessels. While high blood pressure is common, many people don't know they have it because they don't feel sick. But if you don't take high blood pressure seriously, you can damage your heart, brain, or kidneys, leading to heart attack, stroke, or kidney failure.


## So what can I do?


The five areas listed below can help all patients with high blood pressure.

**1**  **Take your medicine every day.** It might be helpful to take your medicine at the same time every day so you don't forget. Be patient: It may take time to find the right medication and dose for you. Talk to your provider if you have any side effects. Finding the right medication for you is important. The need for medication is not a failure on your part and will reduce damage to your heart.

**2**  **Take your blood pressure at home.** Use an at-home machine to take your blood pressure in the morning and evening. Look on the *back of this page* for tips to get a good blood pressure reading. Ask your doctor for a log to write down your daily blood pressures.

**3**  **Move more!** Physical activity will make your heart stronger and help control your weight. If it's hard to get 30 minutes of activity every day, break it up into smaller pieces. Try walking for 10 minutes, 3 times a day.

**4**  **Eat less salt.** The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet can help you eat less sodium, or salt, to lower your blood pressure. Most salt comes from packaged foods or food from restaurants. Salt is already in these foods, so even without using your salt shaker you may be eating too much. Making food at home lets you control the amount of salt and you can be creative with other flavors. Try cooking with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning for great flavor without salt.

**5**  **Focus on healthy foods.** You can eat different foods on the DASH diet that are lower in salt and good for your heart. You can eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, fish, chicken, beans, nuts, and more. Try making small changes over a couple weeks to help you get used to the DASH diet.

**Take your  
blood pressure  
twice a day**

## Special note for Black patients with high blood pressure:

High blood pressure is common in the Black community. Not only can you have high blood pressure earlier in life, but it can also be more difficult to control and often requires medication.

## Why is the DASH diet and eating less salt important to the Black community?

Salt-sensitive hypertension is when your blood pressure goes up after eating salty foods. Most people with high blood pressure see their blood pressure increase due to sodium. This is more common in the Black community.



## Tips to get a good blood pressure reading:



Blood Pressure Classification	Systolic (mmHg)	Diastolic (mmHg)	Your Goal*
Normal	<120	and <80	<b>&lt;130/80</b>
Prehypertension	120-129	and <80	
Stage 1 Hypertension	130-139	or 80-89	
Stage 2 Hypertension	≥140	or ≥90	

These guidelines are based on the AHA 2025 Guideline for the Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Management of High Blood Pressure in Adults. Check with your provider to see if <120 systolic is right for you.

Materials adapted from TARGET:BP in conjunction with American Heart Association and American Medical Association.

