

Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#50 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

High Blood Pressure

It's in your court!

**How to know it
and control it**



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High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Can Kill You

Left untreated, high blood pressure can cause:

- Heart disease.
- Stroke.
- Heart attacks and heart failure.
- Problems with blood vessels and circulation.
- Kidney disease.
- Eye problems (reduced vision, blindness).
- Sexual dysfunction.
- Early death.



Know Your Numbers

- About 3 in 10 adult New Yorkers have been told they have high blood pressure. Hundreds of thousands more have it but don't know it.
- Blacks are more likely than other groups to have high blood pressure.
- More than half of people 65 and older have high blood pressure.
- Because there are usually no symptoms, the only way to know you have high blood pressure is to get checked regularly.



Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure

Healthy lifestyle changes are powerful.

If you smoke, quit now.

- If you have high blood pressure and smoke, your risk of a heart attack is more than double.
- For free help quitting, call 311 and ask for the Smokers' Quitline.

Eat a heart-healthy diet and cut the salt.

- Limit salt (sodium) in your diet.
- Eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Choose low-fat dairy products and lean meat and fish.
- Limit alcohol intake.

Call 311
for a free
copy



Get moving.

- Get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (such as a brisk walk) at least 5 days a week.
- If you are overweight, losing as little as 10 pounds can lower your blood pressure.

Take all the medication your doctor prescribes.

- When diet and exercise aren't enough, blood pressure-lowering medicines are safe and effective.
- Your doctor may prescribe one or more medications.
- Some people stop taking their medicine or skip doses because:
 - They don't feel sick, or
 - They're afraid they can't afford it, or
 - They're worried about side effects.

- Your doctor can help with these problems, so don't stop your medicine! Call your doctor to find a solution.
- Ask your doctor if taking low-dose aspirin can help reduce your chance of heart attack or stroke.



Check Your Own Blood Pressure

- Many pharmacies have machines you can use to take your pressure for free.
- Home blood pressure monitors are accurate and easy to use. You can buy them at most pharmacies and department stores.
- Call 311 for a handy blood pressure tracking card to record daily or weekly readings.
- Bring this card whenever you see a health care provider.



Know Your Numbers

Blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries.

Blood pressure is measured with 2 numbers. It is written with one number over the other, such as:

115 = Systolic = heart pumps blood
75 = Diastolic = heart relaxes

Blood Pressure Levels

	Optimal The Goal for Most People*	Pre- Hypertension On the Way to High Blood Pressure	Hypertension High Blood Pressure
Systolic Top Number	Below 120	120 to 139	140 or higher
	AND	OR	OR
Diastolic Bottom Number	Below 80	80 to 89	90 or higher

Both systolic (top) and diastolic (bottom) numbers are important. When either number is too high, the category changes. For example: If your blood pressure is 119/92, you have high blood pressure because the bottom number is too high (even though the top number is okay).

* If you have diabetes or chronic kidney disease, your blood pressure goal should be below 130/80.

**Hypertension = High Blood Pressure
 = Take Action Now!**

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More Information and Help

- **New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:**
nyc.gov/heart or call 311 and ask for information on “blood pressure”
- **American Heart Association:**
www.americanheart.org or
1-800-AHA-USA-1 (1-800-242-8721)
- **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**
www.cdc.gov/heartdisease
- **National Institutes of Health:**
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp
- **Tool to assess your heart disease risk:**
www.yourdiseaserisk.harvard.edu

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner
Geoffrey Cowley, Associate Commissioner
Cortnie Lowe, M.F.A., Executive Editor
Drew Blakeman, Senior Writer

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