

## What do **Blood Pressure** numbers tell us?

- **Systolic (top number/larger number)** - how much pressure is in your arteries when the heart beats (pumps)
- **Diastolic (bottom number)** - how much pressure is in the arteries when the heart rests (in between beats)



## What do the numbers mean?

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (UPPER NUMBER)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (LOWER NUMBER)
<b>NORMAL</b>	<b>LESS THAN 120</b>	<b>AND</b>	<b>LESS THAN 80</b>
<b>ELEVATED</b>	<b>120-129</b>	<b>AND</b>	<b>LESS THAN 80</b>
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION STAGE 1)</b>	<b>130-139</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>80-89</b>
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION STAGE 2)</b>	<b>140 OR HIGHER</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>90 OR HIGHER</b>
<b>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (CONSULT DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY)</b>	<b>HIGHER THAN 180</b>	<b>AND/OR</b>	<b>HIGHER THAN 120</b>

## 3 Symptoms of Hypertension

Many times, people with high blood pressure (HBP) have no symptoms at all; this is why hypertension is known as the silent killer. Even dangerously high blood pressure can have no symptoms.

Occasionally high blood pressure cause symptoms of:

- Headaches
- Shortness of breath
- Nosebleeds

**These symptoms normally don't happen until blood pressure is severe or life-threatening.**

# How High Blood Pressure Effects Health & Quality of Life

**High blood pressure causes damage to the walls of blood vessels because of the pressure it puts on them. Most of the time, the damage happens over time from unknown or untreated high blood pressure.**

- **Heart attack or stroke**- hardening/thickening of the arteries prevents blood flow to heart or brain causing damage to tissue.
- **Heart failure**- high pressure in blood vessels makes the heart pump harder. That causes the walls of the heart to thicken. This leads to the heart not being able to pump enough blood to give the body what it needs.
- **Kidney disease or failure**- weakened and narrowed arteries in the kidneys keeps them from filtering the blood properly.
- **Vision loss**- Stress on the eye vessels caused by increased pressure leads to vision loss.
- **Sexual dysfunction**- erectile dysfunction happens in men with high blood pressure because of damage to the vessels. This same type of damage can lower libido in women.
- **Memory trouble/Dementia**- narrowed and blocked arteries limits the amount of blood flow to the brain which may cause trouble remembering and understanding concepts. Stroke from high blood pressure also causes this due to damage to brain tissue.

## So Now What?

- Check your blood pressure regularly (as often as your doctor recommends).
- See your doctor yearly.
- Know your numbers (blood pressure, BMI, or waist circumference, cholesterol, & triglycerides).
- Start making lifestyle changes that help lower blood pressure.
  - Eat a well balanced diet high in fruits, veggies, and whole grains while low in fatty processed foods.
  - Reduce salt (sodium) in your diet- 2300 mg/day for most people and ideally 1500 mg/day for most adults, especially those who have high blood pressure. Read labels, including serving sizes, to figure sodium.
  - Exercise at least 150 minutes/week of moderate cardio exercise, ideally divided 30 mins/day 5 days/week.
- Avoid nicotine (smoking/chewing/vaping) including second hand smoke.
- Limit alcohol consumption- men 1-2 drinks/day, women 0-1 drinks/day. 1 drink= 12 oz of beer, 5 oz of wine, 1.5 oz of hard liquor
- Be sure to take any medications exactly as prescribed. Do not discontinue them suddenly or change your schedule without talking with your care provider.
- Advise your doctor right away of any side effects of your medication. Your doctor may be able to adjust your dosage or change medications to alleviate any side effects
- Reduce stress and build a great support system.

### Sources:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/symptoms-causes/syc-20373410>  
<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/health-threats-from-high-blood-pressure>  
<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/shaking-the-salt-habit-to-lower-high-blood-pressure>