



Blood Pressure

metro





Blood pressure 101

High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is a common condition that affects many of us. It is often referred to as a silent killer because, unlike having an infection where you would seek medical attention, there are no symptoms and you cannot feel it. There are many factors that may put you at higher risk of having high blood pressure, including aging, being overweight, having a family history of high blood pressure, a sedentary lifestyle, high levels of stress, consuming too much salt in the diet, smoking and drinking too much alcohol.

Why should I care?

If not well controlled, high blood pressure may increase your risk of heart disease, which may lead to a heart attack or stroke. It can also lead to kidney and brain damage as well as sexual problems in men. The higher your blood pressure and the longer it remains high the more damage it may cause to your blood vessels.

What should my blood pressure be?

	Systolic* (mmHg)	Diastolic* (mmHg)
Most people	<140	<90
People with diabetes or kidney disease	<130	<80
High-normal	130 - 139	85 - 89

* Systolic blood pressure = the pressure when the heart pumps out blood; diastolic blood pressure = the pressure when the heart fills with blood

Regular blood pressure monitoring is important! Did you know that more than half the people with high-normal blood pressure will develop high blood pressure within FOUR years unless they make lifestyle changes?

Interesting facts and figures

The Canadian Heart Health Survey™ found:

- High blood pressure affects about one in five Canadians
- 43% of Canadians with high blood pressure don't know they have it
- With proper diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure, you can decrease your risk of a stroke by up to 40% and of a heart attack by up to 25%

What YOU can do!

TRY

- To be physically active. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes on most days of the week, keeping in mind that even a little bit a day is better than nothing at all. Look for activities you enjoy to help the time go by faster. 
- To maintain your ideal body weight. If you are overweight, losing just 5 kilos can lower your blood pressure. 
- To eat healthy foods. Choose more vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy products, foods low in saturated and trans fats, whole grains and lean meat, fish and poultry. 

AVOID

- Too much salt. Look for foods labelled "low sodium" or ones that contain 10% or less of your recommended daily sodium intake. In general, processed foods contain higher salt levels. 
- Too much alcohol. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink to one to two drinks per day or less. 
- Smoking. Your risk of developing heart problems as well as other diseases increases with smoking. It is important that your home and workplace be smoke-free as well. 



Eating a healthy diet (DASH)!

DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stopping Hypertension) is a way to lower blood pressure through changes to your diet.

DASH (servings per day)			DASH (servings per day)	
Fruits & Vegetables	8 to 10		Milk & Alternatives	2 to 3
Grain Products	7 to 8		Meat & Alternatives	2 to 3

Tips to getting started:

- Change gradually - add one serving of fruits or vegetables to a meal or as a snack over time
- Treat meat as part of a meal instead of the main focus
- Choose fruit or low-fat foods as desserts and snacks
- Gradually reduce the amount of salt in your diet until you reach your target (the DASH diet recommends that you consume no more than 2,300 mg of table salt - about 1 teaspoonful - per day)
- Try using other seasonings (such as herbs, spices, lemon, garlic) instead of salt to flavour food
- If you drink alcohol, try to limit the amount to two drinks per day or less, with a weekly limit of fourteen drinks for men and nine drinks for women.

How to measure your blood pressure

To get an accurate measurement:

- AVOID smoking or drinking caffeine (coffee, tea, cola, certain sports drinks) 30 minutes beforehand
- AVOID measuring your blood pressure when you are upset or in pain
- Empty your bladder or bowel if necessary before starting
- SIT QUIETLY with your feet flat on the floor and back resting against the back of a chair or a firm surface for about five minutes before measuring and during the measurement
- Use the same arm each time
- REMOVE bulky or tight clothing from your arm completely
- Wrap the blood pressure cuff snugly around your bare upper arm (two fingers should fit between the cuff and your arm)
- The edge of the cuff should be 1-2 cm above your elbow
- Place your arm on a table or firm surface - the cuff should be at the level of your heart
- DO NOT talk during the test
- Take one reading and record your results



The material in this brochure is written by a licensed pharmacist. It is intended for information purposes only and should not be used in place of consultation with a health care professional.

Metro Ontario Pharmacies Limited is not responsible for errors, omissions or inconsistencies with respect to the information contained in this brochure and does not accept any liability whatsoever for reliance by the reader on the information contained herein.

metro

