

Managing your high blood pressure



If you have, or are at risk for, high blood pressure, it's important to ensure you have the right treatment plan for your unique needs.

BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICATIONS that are typically used to treat high blood pressure (or hypertension) should be closely managed to ensure you are using the right drug, and the right dosage, for your condition.

If you've been taking a blood pressure medication for a long time, make sure you have regular discussions with your health care provider.

About blood pressure

Blood pressure is measured by doing a blood pressure reading, which produces two distinct numbers: a systolic pressure and a diastolic pressure, i.e. 120/80 mm Hg.

Systolic blood pressure (the first number) refers to the amount of pressure in the arteries during the contraction of the heart muscle. Diastolic pressure (the second number) refers to the blood pressure when your heart muscle is between beats.

A common blood pressure target is usually less than 140/90 mm Hg, but it could be lower or higher in certain situations.

High blood pressure occurs when the pressure inside your arteries increases, meaning your heart has to work harder to continue pumping blood.

Your target blood pressure numbers can take into account individual factors including your age, current health profile, medications list, and more. There is not necessarily one consistent goal for everyone.^{1,2}

High blood pressure can cause strokes, vision loss, heart failure, heart attacks, kidney problems, and erectile dysfunction.³ Medications can help to prevent many of these serious conditions when they are successfully tolerated.

Medication management

There are many types of blood pressure medications available today, and just like blood pressure targets, it's crucial to find the right one for your individual needs by working directly with your health care provider. For example, if you have heart disease, diabetes or kidney disease, you may be referred toward a specific type of medication over another.

Pay close attention to your blood pressure to ensure it stays at your targeted levels; you don't want it to go too high or too low.

If you have, or are at risk for, high blood pressure, work with your health care provider to determine your personal blood pressure target numbers.

If your blood pressure dips too low, you may experience light-headedness, dizziness, or you may fall. If this happens to you, do not suddenly stop your blood pressure medication(s) and see your health care provider to assess your symptoms.

If your symptoms were caused by your blood pressure medication(s), your provider may change the dose and/or the medication, or even stop it all together.

Talk with your health care provider to learn more about high blood pressure treatment and prevention options.

Additional information can be found at:

- healthlinkbc.ca
- heartandstroke.ca

¹ti.ubc.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/106.pdf
²guidelines.hypertension.ca/prevention-treatment/uncomplicated-hypertension-goals-of-therapy
³heart.org/-/media/files/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/consequences-of-high-blood-pressure-infographic-pdf-ucm_464947.pdf?la=en
⁴heart.org/-/media/files/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/what-can-i-do-to-improve-my-blood-pressure-chart-ucm_486661.pdf?la=en
⁵guidelines.hypertension.ca/prevention-treatment/uncomplicated-hypertension-therapy
⁶heartandstroke.ca/get-healthy/healthy-eating/dash-diet

How lifestyle changes and medications can affect blood pressure^{4,5}

If you have high blood pressure, ask your doctor about possible lifestyle changes that you could make to help improve your condition.

CHANGES	RECOMMENDATIONS	APPROX. SYSTOLIC BP CHANGE
Weight reduction	Maintain a healthy body weight.	↓ 5 mm Hg
DASH eating plan	Includes vegetables, fruit, and foods lower in saturated fat, total fat and cholesterol. ⁶	↓ 11 mm Hg
Low sodium intake	Limit salt from all sources to less than 1 teaspoon per day. Salt is hidden in many commonly eaten foods, including canned foods, take-out, and prepared meals.	↓ 5 to 6 mm Hg
Physical activity	Aim for 90-150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week. Exercise most days of the week, but consult with your health care provider before beginning a new exercise routine.	↓ 5 to 8 mm Hg
An average blood pressure medication	Choice depends on many factors, including a person's medical condition(s).	↓ 10 mm Hg

