

The New American Heart Association Guidelines

Adopted from www.americanheart.org

New high blood pressure guidelines suggest early and aggressive treatments.

High blood pressure affects about 50 million Americans and 1 billion people worldwide. New recommendations for tighter control of high blood pressure may drastically reduce the number of individuals who die each year from high blood pressure (hypertension) related illnesses.

Pay attention to blood pressure before it's high.

The new classification – “prehypertension” – describes people with blood pressures between 120-139 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg) systolic (the top number in a blood pressure reading) or 80-89 mm Hg diastolic (bottom number).

The new prehypertension category focuses physician, patient and public attention on blood pressure in these ranges to motivate them to adopt health-promoting lifestyles.

For people over age 50, systolic pressure is more important than diastolic.

The guidelines say systolic pressure of 140 mm Hg or greater in that age group should be treated regardless of the diastolic blood pressure level. For patients with stage one hypertension (systolic pressure of 140-159 mm Hg) and additional cardiovascular risk factors, a sustained 12 mm Hg reduction in systolic pressure for more than 10 years will prevent about one death for every 11 patients.

Patients and clinicians should not be lulled into a false sense of security because of a ‘normal’ diastolic blood pressure. Focused treatment at this age can mean great benefits later in life in the form of less cardiovascular and kidney disease, which have a huge impact on quality of life.

Two (or more) drugs are better than one for many patients.

Using more than one drug to treat most patients will be the key to improving blood pressure control rates. Patients and physicians need to begin the drug treatment process with an open mind to using as much medication as necessary to achieve the blood pressure goal.

For most patients, controlling high systolic pressure has been considerably more difficult than controlling diastolic hypertension. Recent clinical trials have shown that two or more antihypertensive drugs may be needed to achieve optimal pressure.

Build trusting clinician/patient relationships that motivate patients to be healthy.

The most effective therapy prescribed by the most careful clinician will control hypertension only if patients are motivated. A patient-centered strategy to achieve the goal and an estimated time for reaching the goal are important.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



Get the facts on your blood pressure today and help prevent serious health risks.

What is high blood pressure?

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension (elevated pressure of the blood in the main arteries), is indicated by blood pressure readings above 140 mm Hg (systolic) / 90 mm Hg (diastolic), measured while at rest. When you have high blood pressure, it is partly because your blood vessels become narrower, forcing your heart to pump harder to move blood through your body. These changes cause the blood to press on the vessels' walls with greater force.

Why is high blood pressure so dangerous?

It is dangerous because it forces the heart to work hard. If not controlled over time, high blood pressure can affect not only your heart and blood vessels but also other organs, possibly leading to strokes or congestive heart failure, impaired vision, or kidney damage.

What symptoms can be associated with high blood pressure?

- Ringing in the ears
- Fainting spells
- Headaches
- Eye disorders

How do I improve my condition or prevent high blood pressure from recurring?

Consult with your U.S. HealthWorks physician for the best solutions. You may be able to reduce your risk by:

- Improving your diet (reduce salt, red meat, fat, and excessive alcohol).
- Exercising regularly. Exercise should be an important part of your life, but always check with your U.S. HealthWorks physician for the best routine.
- Avoiding tobacco products. Smoking will significantly increase the risk of high blood pressure. You should avoid secondhand smoke and consider quitting if you do smoke.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

