

# High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

## What Is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of your blood vessels, called arteries. Each time your heart beats, it pumps blood into the arteries. Your blood pressure is highest when your heart beats and pumps blood. This is called systolic pressure. When your heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is called diastolic pressure.

When you get your blood pressure checked, you will read 2 numbers. The top number is your systolic pressure. The bottom number is your diastolic pressure. For example, a blood pressure reading of 120/80 mmHg (millimeters of mercury) is often read as "120 over 80."



## Know Your Numbers

Nearly half of all adults in the U.S. have high blood pressure (also known as Hypertension). Hypertension is when your systolic blood pressure is more than 130 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure is more than 80 mmHg.

The best way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get your blood pressure checked. There are 5 blood pressure ranges:

Blood Pressure	Systolic mmHg (top number)	And/Or	Diastolic mmHg (bottom number)
Normal	Less than 120	And	Less than 80
Elevated Blood Pressure	120 – 129	And	Less than 80
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	130 – 139	Or	80 – 89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	140 or more	Or	90 or more
Hypertensive Crisis (talk to your PCP right away)	More than 180	And/Or	More than 120

## Risks of High Blood Pressure

Most of the time there are no clear symptoms of high blood pressure. Some physical traits and lifestyle choices can put you more at risk for high blood pressure. Having high blood pressure strains the heart and arteries more. Over time, this will harm your organs. High blood pressure will increase the risk of:

- Heart failure
- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Kidney failure

Only 1 in 4 adults with hypertension have it under control. But you can control your blood pressure with healthy habits and medicine if needed.



For more information call Customer Service at **1(415) 547-7800** or visit **[sfhp.org/health-ed](https://sfhp.org/health-ed)**

24/7 Nurse Advice Line **1(877) 977-3397** | Talk to a doctor 24/7 **[sfhp.org/teladoc](https://sfhp.org/teladoc)**



## Preventing and Managing High Blood Pressure

Making simple and small changes in your life can help you prevent high blood pressure. Treating high blood pressure starts with lifestyle changes. Medicine to lower blood pressure may help if your blood pressure is often high. Talk with your Primary Care Provider (PCP\*) to find out what your blood pressure goal is.



- **Keep a healthy weight.** Aim for a healthy body mass index (BMI) less than 24\*\*. **Calculate your BMI** or ask your PCP for what your healthy BMI goal is.



- **Try the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan.** It is an easy, heart-healthy food plan that can help prevent or lower high blood pressure. The DASH diet is low in salt (sodium), cholesterol, and saturated and total fats. It is high in fruits, veggies, fiber, potassium, and low-fat dairy products.

- **Eat fresh fruits and veggies.** Have 1½ to 2 cups of fruits and 2 to 3 cups of veggies each day.

- **Be salt smart.** Try to stay under 1,500 milligrams (mg) or 2/3 teaspoon of salt (sodium) per day if you have high blood pressure.

- **Get active.** Move your body 150 minutes each week by doing something you enjoy. Try a fun activity like dancing, swimming, playing with your kids, walking, or taking a class. Every step and every minute counts!

- **Limit alcohol.** For women, have 1 drink or less per day; or, for men 2 drinks or less per day.



- **If you smoke, take steps to cut back or quit.** You can get medicine to help quit tobacco at no cost through Medi-Cal. Talk with your PCP, call Kick It California at **1(800) 300-8086**, or visit **kickitca.org**.



\*Your PCP is the doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant in charge of your health care.

\*\*BMI may differ based on ethnicity. Learn more about **adult BMI at CDC**.

## High Blood Pressure Emergencies

Some people check their blood pressure at home using a home blood pressure meter. You can get a home blood pressure meter and cuff at no-cost through Medi-Cal. If you read your blood pressure at home, call your PCP if you have 2 or more readings higher than 180 over 120.

**Readings more than 180/120 mmHg are not safe and need medical attention right away.**



For more info, please visit the **American Heart Association**.

Sources:



*"The Facts About High Blood Pressure"*  
American Heart Association  
**heart.org**



*"DASH Eating Plan"*  
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute  
**nhlbi.nih.gov**



*"Understanding Blood Pressure Readings"* American Heart Association  
**heart.org**



*"Facts About Hypertension"*  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
**cdc.gov**

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