GEORGIA'S
Nuts About Health

5 Things You Need to Know About Blood Pressure

In the United States, about 72 million people have high blood pressure. This is about 1 in 3 adults. Understand your risk for high blood pressure and learn how to maintain a healthy blood pressure level.

1. Know your numbers and what they mean

It's important to know your blood pressure numbers and understand what they mean. You want the top number (systolic) to be below 120 and the bottom number (diastolic) to be below 80.

	Normal	Pre-Hypertension	High blood pressure
Systolic/Diastolic	Below 120/80	Between 120/80 and 139/89	140/90 and higher

The top number (systolic) is the pressure when the heart beats. The bottom number (diastolic) is the pressure when the heart rests between beats. If you have a blood pressure higher than 120/80, your heart is working hard to get blood properly circulating throughout the body.

(continued on next page)

IMPORTANT DATES

Mother's day is May 9.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

May is National Blood Pressure Awareness Month. **Do you know your blood pressure number?**

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5 Things You Need to Know About Blood Pressure *(continued)*

2. Symptoms of high blood pressure

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms. That's why it's called the 'silent killer.' The only way to know if your blood pressure is high is to check it regularly.

However, because blood pressure readings may vary with the time of day and your general disposition, it is recommended that you be consistent with the time at which you take your blood pressure every day.

3. How high blood pressure affects the body

High blood pressure can damage blood vessels in various parts of the body. And the longer it's left untreated, the more likely it is that organs such as your heart, brain, kidneys or eyes will be damaged. This can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney disease and blindness.

4. Who is at risk for high blood pressure

Certain factors may increase your risk for developing high blood pressure.

- Males older than 45 or females older than 55 as blood pressure tends to rise with age
- African American adults develop high blood pressure earlier in life than other race and ethnicity groups; African Americans also tend to have more severe high blood pressure and health consequences
- Overweight or obese adults are more likely to develop prehypertension or high blood pressure
- Lifestyle factors such as eating too much salt, drinking too much alcohol, not getting enough potassium, being physically inactive and smoking can also increase your risk
- Family history of high blood pressure also increases your risk
- Long-lasting stress may cause high blood pressure

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5 Things You Need to Know About Blood Pressure *(continued)*

5. How to achieve and maintain a normal blood pressure

While you can't control heredity, you can control the risk factors associated with high blood pressure. First, work with your doctor to determine the best treatment for you.

- Lose weight if you're overweight
- Eat healthy foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and salt
- Eat a diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables (which are high in potassium) and low-fat dairy products
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink a day if you are a woman, two drinks if you are a man
- Stop smoking
- Manage your stress and learn to cope with stress
- Take any medication prescribed by your doctor as instructed even if you are feeling okay

Source: NHLBI, NIH

The DASH Eating Plan

The **D**ietary **A**pproaches to **S**top **H**ypertension plan is aimed at lowering your blood pressure by focusing on the combinations of nutrients in wholesome foods. The **DASH** eating plan recommends:

Daily servings:

- Seven to eight servings of grains or grain products
- Four to five servings of vegetables
- Four to five servings of fruit
- Two to three servings of low-fat dairy foods
- No more than two servings of meat, poultry and fish
- Two to three servings of fats and oils
- Strive to consume below 1500 mg of sodium but no more than 2300 mg

Weekly servings:

- Four to five servings of nuts, seeds and beans
- No more than five servings of sweets

Visit http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf to learn more about the DASH healthy eating plan and view sample meal plans and recipes.

Please visit
www.dch.georgia.gov/shbp
to view additional issues of this publication.

Important contact information

Where to go when you want information

Customer Care HRA Choice (HMO), HDHP, Choice Plus (OAP) TDD	 800-396-6515 877-246-4189 800-255-0056
Nurseline	866-696-5846
Disease Management Programs	877-246-4189
Health Coaches	800-478-1057
Address Change	www.dch.georgia.gov/shbp_plans Print misc/change form and submit to payroll manager

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