

## What Puts You at Risk for High Blood Pressure

Conditions or traits that you are born with or those related to your lifestyle can increase your risk of developing high blood pressure. These are called risk factors.

Risk factors that can be changed or controlled include an unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity, drinking too much alcohol, and using tobacco or cannabis.

Some risk factors you can't control are genetics, your age, or your race.

## Prevent and Manage High Blood Pressure

- Know your blood pressure! Measure it regularly. See “How to Take Your Blood Pressure” inside.
- Take your medicines as directed.
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle. Get regular physical activity, avoid smoking and tobacco products, eat a balanced diet, maintain a healthy weight, get enough sleep, limit alcohol, and manage stress.

## True or False?

Most people with high blood pressure have no symptoms.

**True!** High blood pressure usually has no symptoms. Many people do not know they have it.

Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure.

**True!** Routinely drinking alcohol can cause long-term rises in blood pressure.

You don't have to worry about high blood pressure if you're young.

**False.** Although high blood pressure is more common in older people, young people can have it, too.

It's normal to have high blood pressure.

**False.** High blood pressure is common, but it is not normal. You can lower your risk by making healthy lifestyle changes.

Lifestyle changes can lower your risk of high blood pressure.

**True!** Changes like healthy eating and consistent exercise can help.

If your blood pressure comes down while you're taking medicines, you can stop taking them.

**False.** Keep taking your medicines. Talk to your health care provider if you have any concerns.

## Key Takeaways

- Nearly **half** of all U.S. adults have high blood pressure. Many people do not know it.
- Only about **1 in 4** U.S. adults with high blood pressure have it under control.
- Measuring your blood pressure is the **only way** to know whether you have high blood pressure.
- High blood pressure can damage your heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes.
- High blood pressure is **more common** among New York's Black non-Hispanic and White non-Hispanic adults. However, **people of any** ethnicity or race can have high blood pressure.

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# Understanding Your Blood Pressure



## Did you know...

- ♥ High blood pressure is a major risk for heart disease and stroke.
- ♥ These are two of the top leading causes of death in New York State.
- ♥ You can help lower your blood pressure by making lifestyle changes. This may prevent up to 80% of heart disease and stroke cases.



## What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood flowing through your body. Your blood pressure numbers tell you how hard your heart has to work.

- **High blood pressure** is when blood pressure readings are consistently higher than normal. This is also known as **hypertension**.
- A health care provider diagnoses high blood pressure after 2 higher than normal readings. These readings must be taken at least 2 weeks apart.
- High blood pressure is a leading risk for cardiovascular, or heart-related disease. This can cause heart attack and stroke.
- A blood pressure reading will show 2 numbers:
  - The top number measures the force when your heart beats. It's called the systolic blood pressure, *pronounced sis-STAH-lick*.
  - The bottom number measures the force between beats—when your heart is relaxed. It's called the diastolic blood pressure, *pronounced digh-uh-STAH-lick*.
- Your blood pressure monitor will show your heart rate as "Pulse." Heart rate or Pulse is the number of times your heart beats in one minute.
- Systolic, Diastolic, and Pulse are all numbers you can find on your blood pressure monitor!

## Measure Blood Pressure the Right Way

- Sit with your back supported

- Keep arm bare and supported
- For accuracy, use the right cuff size
- Place middle of cuff at heart level
- Keep lower edge of cuff 1 and 3/16 in. above elbow crease

- Keep feet flat on floor
- Uncross your legs
- Do not talk or move before or during the reading

## How to Take Your Blood Pressure

Are you on blood pressure medicine? If so, take your blood pressure daily, and then take your medicine as directed by your health care provider.

For at least 30 minutes before taking your blood pressure, do not consume caffeine, tobacco, cannabis products, other stimulants, or food.

Use the bathroom before taking your blood pressure.

Find a quiet space where you can sit in comfort with no distractions. Rest for 5 minutes, then take your blood pressure. Avoid conversations, your phone, TV, and other devices.

Take 2 or 3 measurements, resting for 1 minute between each. Record your blood pressure, as well as the time and date.

| Date | Time | Systolic (Top Number) | Diastolic (Bottom Number) | Heart Rate (Pulse) |
|------|------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
|      |      |                       |                           |                    |
|      |      |                       |                           |                    |
|      |      |                       |                           |                    |

## Blood Pressure Categories

| BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY   | SYSTOLIC MM HG (top number) |        | DIASTOLIC MM HG (bottom number) |  |
|---|-----------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|--|
| NORMAL  | LESS THAN 120               | and    | LESS THAN 80                    |  |
| ELEVATED  | 120-129                     | and    | LESS THAN 80                    |  |
| STAGE 1 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)  | 130-139                     | or     | 80-89                           |  |
| STAGE 2 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)  | 140 OR HIGHER               | or     | 90 OR HIGHER                    |  |
| SEVERE HYPERTENSION (If you don't have symptoms*, call your health care provider) | HIGHER THAN 180             | and/or | HIGHER THAN 120                 |  |
| HYPERTENSION EMERGENCY (If you have symptoms*, call 911)                          | HIGHER THAN 180             | and/or | HIGHER THAN 120                 |  |

\*symptoms: chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision, or difficulty speaking

Reference: American Heart Association. (n.d.). *Understanding Blood Pressure Readings*. [heart.org/bplevels](http://heart.org/bplevels)

