

How to  
check your

# Blood Pressure



# Table of Contents

How to check your blood pressure.....	1
Know your numbers – write them down! .....	2
What the numbers mean .....	3
Blood pressure and your heart .....	4
It’s important to control your blood pressure.....	5
Blood Pressure Tracker .....	7
More copies/Acknowledgements .....	9



# How to check your blood pressure

Whether you or a health care provider measures your blood pressure, it is important to use the size of blood pressure cuff that fits your arm.



**Readings can vary from arm to arm. Use the same arm each time you check your blood pressure.**

## Before you start

- ◆ Do not drink coffee for at least 30 minutes before measuring.
- ◆ Do not use tobacco products for at least 30 minutes before measuring.
- ◆ Do not exercise or eat a large meal two hours before measuring.
- ◆ Use the restroom. A full bladder can affect the reading.

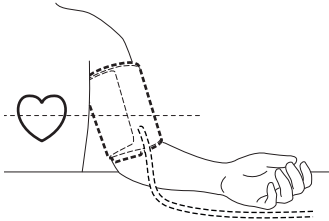
**For accurate measurement, be sure to:**

1. Sit quietly in a chair for 5 minutes before measuring.
2. Sit with your back supported and feet flat on the ground.
3. Remove clothing from your upper arm.
4. Make sure your arm is supported at the level of your heart on a table or armrest.
5. Do not talk while having your blood pressure measured.

# Know your numbers – write them down!

The blood pressure monitor will measure your top (*systolic*) and bottom (*diastolic*) blood pressure numbers, and your pulse rate.

**120** ← Systolic  
**80** ← Diastolic



Track your blood pressure by writing the date and the reading on the chart at the back of this booklet.

**If the reading is very different from what you expected, please see your medical provider to confirm the reading.**

## You can control your blood pressure

- ◆ We recommend that you take your blood pressure monitor to your medical provider's office twice a year to check accuracy.
- ◆ Work with your medical provider to monitor and control your blood pressure.

**Blood pressure changes during the day, so it is best to take your readings at the same time every day.**

# What the numbers mean

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
<p><b>NORMAL</b>  <b>Excellent!</b> This is right where it needs to be as a normal blood pressure.</p>	<b>LESS THAN 120</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>LESS THAN 80</b>
<p><b>ELEVATED</b>            This is getting up there. Begin lifestyle changes that keep your blood pressure from developing into or becoming hypertension.</p>	<b>120–129</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>LESS THAN 80</b>
<p><b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1</b>            Your blood pressure is high.            You need to see your medical provider.</p>	<b>130–139</b>	<b>or</b>	<b>80–89</b>
<p><b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2</b>            Your blood pressure is very high.            Seek medical care now.</p>	<b>140 OR HIGHER</b>	<b>or</b>	<b>90 OR HIGHER</b>
<p><b>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (Emergency Care Needed)</b>            Your blood pressure is dangerously high.            Call 911 now.*</p>	<b>HIGHER THAN 180</b>	<b>and/or</b>	<b>HIGHER THAN 120</b>

Adapted from the American Heart Association. Created by the Heart Disease, Stroke and Diabetes Prevention Program, Washington State Department of Health

\* Health advice from the Heart Disease, Stroke and Diabetes Prevention Program, Washington State Department of Health

# Blood pressure and your heart

## What is blood pressure?

- ◆ It is the force (pressure) of the blood in the main arteries generated by the pumping action of the heart.
- ◆ When taking a blood pressure, two pressures are measured, *systolic* and *diastolic*.

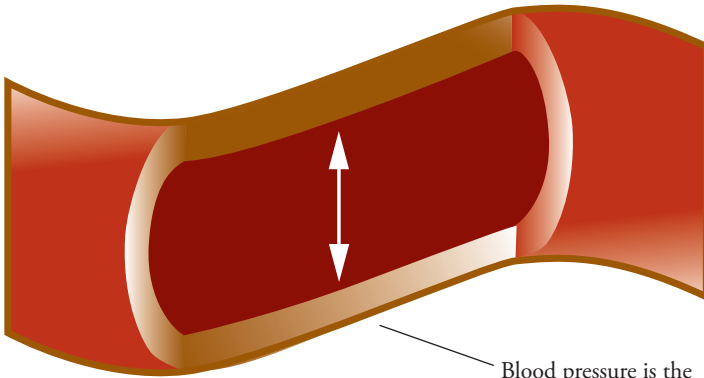
## Systolic

The pressure in the arteries that occurs when the heart contracts. **It is the top and the larger of the two numbers** reported in a blood pressure reading.

## Diastolic

The pressure in the arteries when the heart is relaxed and filling with blood. **It is the lower of the two numbers** reported in a blood pressure reading.

Blood pressure readings are usually given as two numbers. For example, 110 over 70 (written as 110/70).



Blood pressure is the measurement of force applied to artery walls

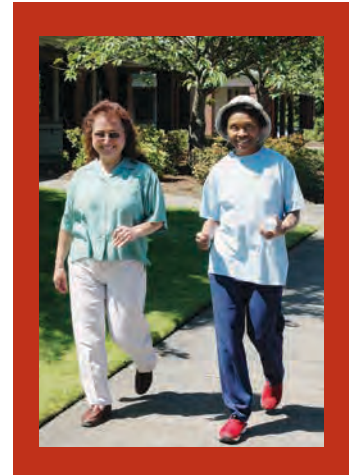
# It's important to control your blood pressure

High blood pressure – hypertension – is a leading cause of heart attack, stroke, heart failure, and kidney failure. Many people have high blood pressure and do not know it. It is often called the “silent killer” because there are rarely symptoms. About 1,000 people in the United States die each day because of high blood pressure.

## Control your blood pressure by making lifestyle changes

You can make simple changes to control your blood pressure and be heart-healthy and stroke-free.

- ◆ **Quit tobacco.**
  - Check out [www.quitline.com](http://www.quitline.com).
  - Talk to your medical provider about medications that may help you quit.
- ◆ **Control your weight.**
  - If you are overweight, even a small weight loss can lower your blood pressure.
- ◆ **Move more – exercise.**
  - 30 minutes of moderate activity, such as walking, 5 days a week can lower your blood pressure.
- ◆ **Eat a diet low in sodium (salt).**



Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	
Servings Per Container	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	
Calories From Fat	
	% Daily
<b>Total Fat</b>	4.5g
Saturated Fat	1.5g
Trans Fat	0g
<b>Cholesterol</b>	30mg
<b>Sodium</b>	1250mg
Total Sugar	16g
Dietary Fiber	2g
Sugars	16g
<b>Protein</b>	14g

- Read food labels.
- Select foods with no more than 400 mg of sodium (salt) per serving, or foods with no more than 10 percent of daily value of sodium per serving.
- Avoid foods that have salt listed as one of the first 10 ingredients.
- Watch out for hidden salt found in compounds used in making foods. Many processed foods are high in sodium (salt).
- Eat no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day. Most Americans eat more than twice this much each day.

- ◆ **Limit alcohol to two drinks per day.**
- ◆ **Control your diabetes.**
- ◆ **Control your cholesterol.**

**To learn more:**

**Quitline.com:** 1-800-QUIT-NOW

**American Heart Association:** [www.Heart.org](http://www.Heart.org)



Fold on dotted lines.

# What's the big deal about controlling my blood pressure?

## Small changes can make a huge difference:

- **A 30-minute walk** every day can drop your blood pressure 10 points.
- **Losing 5–10 pounds** can drop your blood pressure 5 or more points.
- **Quitting tobacco** can drop your blood pressure 5–10 points.

## Before measuring blood pressure:

- **Do not drink coffee** or use tobacco for at least 30 minutes before measuring.
- **Use the restroom** before you measure. A full bladder can affect the reading.
- **Sit with back supported** against the chair and feet flat on the floor.

## Health care provider:

---

---

## Provider phone:

---

# Blood Pressure Tracker





## More copies

**To print online:**

<http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/how-to-check-your-blood-pressure>

**To order copies:** 360-236-3770

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following organizations for contributing to this manual:

- American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
- Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, Washington State Department of Health

Health advice in this manual is given by the Heart Disease, Stroke and Diabetes Prevention Program, Washington State Department of Health.

For persons with disabilities this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TTY/TDD 711).



**Healthy Communities**  
Washington

Partners promoting healthy  
people in healthy places

[www.doh.wa.gov/healthycommunities](http://www.doh.wa.gov/healthycommunities)

**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND  
HEALTHIER WASHINGTON

Washington State Department of  
**Health**

DOH 345-273 January 2018