



# High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)



## What Is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force in your arteries when the heart beats (systolic pressure) or when the heart is at rest (diastolic pressure).

## What Do Blood Pressure Numbers Mean?

When you get your blood pressure read the first number is the systolic pressure and the second number is the diastolic pressure. So “120 over 80” means that systolic pressure is 120 and diastolic pressure is 80.

The American Heart Association has put blood pressure numbers into categories. See where your numbers fit on the table below.

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic Pressure	Diastolic Pressure
Normal	<120	<80
Prehypertension	120-139	80-89
<b>High Blood Pressure</b>		
Stage I	140-159	90-99
Stage II	160 or higher	100 or higher



## What Is High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is systolic pressure greater than or equal to 140 or diastolic pressure greater than or equal to 90. In most cases, the cause is unknown.

## Why Does High Blood Pressure Matter?

High blood pressure means that your heart has to pump harder to get blood through your body. If it keeps pumping too hard, this can strain your heart and damage your blood vessels and other organs.

**High blood pressure puts you at risk for:  
Stroke, heart attack, heart failure, and kidney failure**

## How Can You Lower Your Blood Pressure?

- Lose weight if you're overweight
- Get physically active, for at least 30 minutes on most days
- Eat a heart-healthy diet
  - Low in sodium
  - High in fruits and vegetables and low-fat dairy products
- Avoid excessive alcohol
- Stop smoking
- Manage your stress

