

# Hints from the Heart



## Take the Pressure Off High Blood Pressure!

As blood flows from the heart out to the blood vessels, it creates pressure against the blood vessel walls. Your blood pressure reading is a measure of this pressure. When that reading goes above a certain point, it is called high blood pressure (HBP). Hypertension is another name for HBP. As many as 50 million Americans may have HBP.

In older adults the first number (the upper or systolic number) is often high while the second (the lower or diastolic) number is normal. This condition is called isolated systolic hypertension. Studies prove that lowering the systolic number cuts down on strokes and heart attacks in people age 60 and over. Make sure your blood pressure is under 140/90. If your systolic pressure (the top number) is over 140, ask your doctor what you can do to lower it.

Doctors believe there are many contributing factors that can cause HBP. Blood pressure goes up in all people during periods of stress or exercise. But avoiding stress will not prevent high blood pressure. You can have HBP even though you are usually a calm, relaxed person.

**HBP may not make you feel sick, but it is serious and should be treated by a doctor. Here are some things that can help prevent high blood pressure:**

- 1. Keep your weight moderate**
- 2. Cut down on salt**
- 3. Exercise regularly**
- 4. If you drink, have no more than two drinks a day**



Do not assume these are substitutes for medicine unless your doctor says they are. You can bring down your blood pressure with changes in diet, daily habits or by taking medicines if necessary. Take your medicine at the same time each day to help set a regular, easy-to-remember routine. If one day's dose of medicine is missed, do not double-up the next day. Instead, call your doctor for advice.

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