



Parenthood Awareness before Conception to Enhance Offspring Health – E-learning Addressing Lifestyle to Transform Habits



What is High Blood Pressure factsheet

What is high blood pressure?

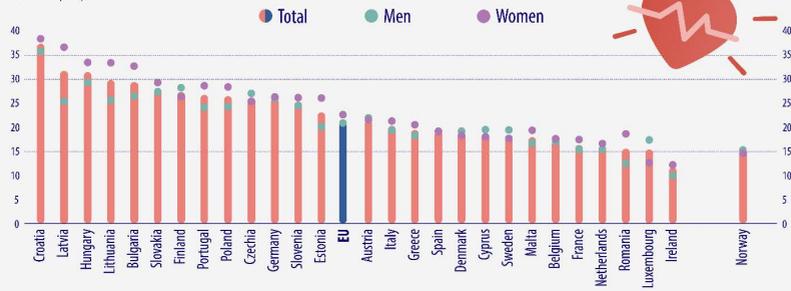
High blood pressure (also referred to as HBP, or hypertension) is when your blood pressure, the force of blood flowing through your blood vessels, is consistently too high. Learn more about high blood pressure.

If you have high blood pressure, you are not alone:

- In 2019, 22% of people in the EU aged 15 years and over reported having high blood pressure (Many don't even know they have it.)
- The best way to know if you have high blood pressure it is to have your blood pressure checked.

Share of people with high blood pressure, 2019

(% of population 15+)



ec.europa.eu/eurostat

Know your numbers / Learn about your blood pressure numbers and what they mean



BLOOD-PRESSURE-CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC-mm·Hg (upper-number)	and/or	DIASTOLIC mm·Hg (lower- number)
NORMAL	LESS-THAN-120	and	LESS-THAN-80
ELEVATED	120–129	and	LESS-THAN-80
HIGH-BLOOD-PRESSURE- (HYPERTENSION)-STAGE-1	130–139	or	80–89
HIGH-BLOOD-PRESSURE- (HYPERTENSION)-STAGE-2	140-OR-HIGHER	or	90-OR- HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE-CRISIS²(consult- your-doctor-immediately)	HIGHER-THAN-180	and/or	HIGHER- THAN-120

High blood pressure is a “silent killer”

- Most of the time there are no obvious symptoms.
- Certain physical traits and lifestyle choices can put you at a greater risk for high blood pressure.
- When left untreated, the damage that high blood pressure does to your circulatory system is a significant contributing factor to heart attack, stroke and other health threats.

Preventing and managing HBP

- This is one time that the old adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” is particularly apt. It’s best to avoid high blood pressure altogether. Healthy lifestyle choices are a great place to start.
- With proper treatment and management, you can control your blood pressure to help you live a long and healthy life.

First, let’s define high blood pressure

High blood pressure (HBP or hypertension) is when your blood pressure, the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your blood vessels, is consistently too high.

How your blood pressure and circulatory system work

In order to survive and function properly, your tissues and organs need the oxygenated blood that your circulatory system carries throughout the body. When the heart beats, it creates pressure that pushes blood through a network of tube-shaped blood vessels, which include arteries, veins and capillaries. This pressure — blood pressure — is the result of two forces: The first force (systolic pressure) occurs as blood pumps out of the heart and into the arteries that are part of the circulatory system. The second force (diastolic pressure) is created as the heart rests between heart beats. (These two forces are each represented by numbers in a blood pressure reading.)

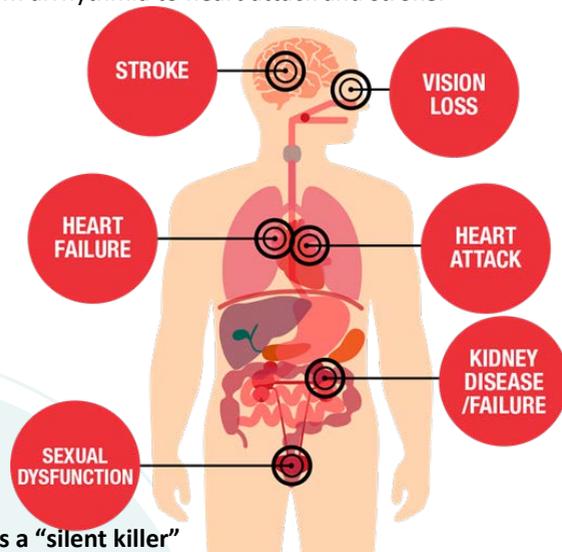


The damage starts in your arteries and heart

The primary way that high blood pressure causes harm is by increasing the workload of the heart and blood vessels — making them work harder and less efficiently.

Over time, the force and friction of high blood pressure damages the delicate tissues inside the arteries. In turn, LDL (bad) cholesterol forms plaque along tiny tears in the artery walls, signifying the start of atherosclerosis.

The more the plaque and damage increases, the narrower (smaller) the insides of the arteries become — raising blood pressure and starting a vicious circle that further harms your arteries, heart and the rest of your body. This can ultimately lead to other conditions ranging from arrhythmia to heart attack and stroke.



High blood pressure is a “silent killer”

You may not feel that anything is wrong, but high blood pressure could be quietly causing damage that can threaten your health. The best prevention is knowing your numbers and making changes that matter in order to prevent and manage high blood pressure.

References: American Heart Association <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/the-facts-about-high-blood-pressure/five-simple-steps-to-control-your-blood-pressure>



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High Blood Pressure Myths & Facts & Actions

MYTHS

Myth: High blood pressure runs in my family. There is nothing I can do to prevent it.

High blood pressure can run in families. If your parents or close blood relatives have had high blood pressure, you are more likely to develop it, too. However, lifestyle choices have allowed many people with a family history of high blood pressure to avoid it themselves.

Myth: I don't use table salt, so I'm in control of my sodium intake and my blood pressure.

In some people, sodium can increase blood pressure. But controlling sodium means more than just putting down the salt shaker. It also means checking labels, because up to 75 percent of the sodium we consume is hidden in processed foods like tomato sauce, soups, condiments, canned foods and prepared mixes. When buying prepared and prepackaged foods, read the labels. Watch for the words "soda" and "sodium" and the symbol "Na" on labels. These words show that sodium compounds are present.

Myth: I use kosher or sea salt when I cook instead of regular table salt. They are low-sodium alternatives.

Chemically, kosher salt and sea salt are the same as table salt — 40 percent sodium— and count the same toward total sodium consumption. Table salt is a combination of the two minerals sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl).

Myth: I feel fine. I don't have to worry about high blood pressure.

About 103 million U.S. adults have high blood pressure — and many of them don't know it or don't experience typical symptoms. High blood pressure is also a major risk factor for stroke. If uncontrolled, high blood pressure can lead to serious and severe health problems.



Myth: People with high blood pressure have nervousness, sweating, difficulty sleeping and their face becomes flushed. I don't have those symptoms so I'm good.

Many people have high blood pressure for years without knowing it. It's often called "the silent killer" because it usually has no symptoms. You may not be aware that it's damaging your arteries, heart and other organs. Know your numbers and don't make the mistake of assuming any specific symptoms will let you know there's a problem.

Myth: I read that wine is good for the heart, which means I can drink as much as I want.

If you drink alcohol, including red wine, do so in moderation. Heavy and regular use of alcohol can increase blood pressure dramatically. It can also cause heart failure, lead to stroke and produce irregular heartbeats. Too much alcohol can contribute to high triglycerides, cancer, obesity, alcoholism, suicide and accidents. If you drink, limit consumption to no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women. Generally, one drink equals a 12-ounce beer, a four-ounce glass of wine, 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor, or one ounce of hard liquor (100 proof).

Myth: I have high blood pressure and my doctor checks it for me. This means I don't need to check it at home.

Because blood pressure can fluctuate, home monitoring and recording of blood pressure readings can provide your healthcare provider with valuable information to determine whether you really have high blood pressure and, if you do, whether your treatment plan is working. It's important to take the readings at the same time each day, such as morning and evening, or as your healthcare professional recommends.

Myth: I was diagnosed with high blood pressure, but I have been maintaining lower readings, so I can stop taking my medication.

High blood pressure can be a lifelong disease. Follow your healthcare professional's recommendations carefully, even if it means taking medication every day for the rest of your life. By partnering with your healthcare team, you can successfully reach your treatment goals and enjoy the benefits of better health.



FACTS

Keeping blood pressure under control can mean adding things to your life, like exercise, that help lower it. It can also mean avoiding things that raise it. Here is a list of BP raisers, and information on how to keep your pressure from getting too high.

Decongestants

People with high blood pressure should be aware that the use of decongestants may raise blood pressure. Many over-the-counter cold and flu preparations contain decongestants.

Salt

The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 milligrams (mgs) a day and an ideal limit of no more than 1,500 mg per day for most adults.

Alcohol

If you drink, limit your consumption to no more than two drinks per day for men and no more than one drink per day for women

Hot tubs and saunas

People with high blood pressure should not move back and forth between cold water and hot tubs or saunas. This could cause an increase in blood pressure.

Weight gain

Did you know you may experience health benefits from losing as few as 10 pounds?

Sitting

Just a few minutes of light activity for people who sit most of the day can lower blood pressure in those with Type 2 diabetes.



ACTIONS TO REDUCE HBP

Your HBP deserves your attention

Uncontrolled high blood pressure (HBP or hypertension) can be fatal. If you've been diagnosed with high blood pressure, these five simple steps can help you keep it under control:

Know your numbers

Most people diagnosed with high blood pressure want to stay below 130/80 mm Hg, but your healthcare provider can tell you your personal target blood pressure.

Work with your doctor

Your healthcare provider will help you make a plan to lower your blood pressure.

Make a few lifestyle changes

- In many cases this will be your doctor's first recommendation, likely in one of these areas:
- Maintain a healthy weight. Strive for a body mass index (BMI) between 18.5 and 24.9.
- Eat healthier. Eat lots of fruit, veggies and low-fat dairy, and less saturated and total fat.
- Reduce sodium. Ideally, stay under 1,500 mg a day, but aim for at least a 1,000 mg per day reduction.
- Get active. Aim for at least 90 to 150 minutes of aerobic and/or dynamic resistance exercise per week and/or three sessions of isometric resistance exercises per week.
- Limit alcohol. Drink no more than 1-2 drinks a day. (One for most women, two for most men.)

Keep checking your blood pressure at home

Take ownership of your treatment by tracking your blood pressure.

Take your medication

If you have to take medication, take it exactly the way your doctor says.

References: American Heart Association <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/the-facts-about-high-blood-pressure/five-simple-steps-to-control-your-blood-pressure>