

THE FAMILY VAN

We are Family

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

(Hypertension)

What is blood pressure?

It is the pressure with which the heart is pumping blood through your arteries. BP or blood pressure, is important to pump blood and oxygen from the heart to the rest of the body.

It is measured with **two numbers**, the upper number (systolic) is the pressure when the heart is beating, and the lower number (diastolic) is the pressure of the heart at rest. These numbers are written in several ways, for example: 120/80 and read as '120 over 80'.



What causes high blood pressure?

In 90 to 95 percent people with high blood pressure, the cause is unknown. There are several **risk factors** which can lead to high blood pressure, such as:

These are Risk Factors YOU can change to lower your Blood Pressure:

- Stop Smoking
- Drink less alcohol
- Eat foods low in salt and fat.
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a normal weight
- Avoid high levels of stress

These Risk Factors also increase blood pressure but unfortunately you can NOT change or control them:

- Heredity (If your parents or other close blood relatives have high BP)
- African American race
- Age
- Certain medical conditions, medications, or pregnancy can also increase blood pressure.



What should my blood pressure be?

The **upper number** should be less than 120 and the **lower number** should be less than 80. In other words, your blood pressure should be less than '120 over 80'.

Sometimes the blood pressure can be a little different on a certain day, so you should come back to The Family Van for more blood pressure readings to get a consistent measurement.

Why is high blood pressure dangerous?

You can have high blood pressure for years without knowing it because in the earlier stages there may not be any symptom. That's why it's called the "silent killer". High blood pressure can be dangerous because it causes your heart to work harder and over time can result in stroke, heart attack, heart failure and kidney disease and other serious health problems.

Is there a cure?

There is **no** cure for high blood pressure. It can be controlled but not cured. There are medicines that your doctor may prescribe for you that help to control your blood pressure. Once you begin these medications you usually take them throughout your life. Besides medicines, you can also help lower your blood pressure by **following these advices below.**

What can I do to lower my blood pressure?

In general, a person may be able to lower their blood pressure by:

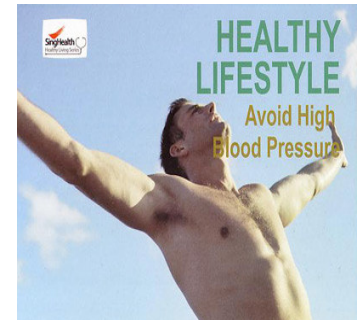
1. Diet:

- Lowering the amount of **salt** that you eat.
Do not add salt to your food.
Avoid high salt food as canned, processed, frozen foods; preserved meats; salted snacks have high amounts of salt.
- Avoiding too much of **fats and oils (grease)**. Avoid fried foods such as fried chicken, French fries, bacon, hamburgers, 'fast foods'.
- Eating at least 5 servings of fresh fruits or vegetables daily.
- Eating bread and cereal that says "whole grain" on the package.



2. Exercise:

- Be more active. Exercise at least 30 minutes every day or most days of the week. If you are not used to exercising, start slowly by taking daily walks and slowly start to take longer and faster walks so that your heart is beating faster and you are sweating. Consult your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- Ask a friend or family member to join you!



3. Weight Control: losing excess weight can help.

4. Stop Smoking

5. Drink less alcohol (limit it to 1-2 drinks/day)

5. Medications: If your doctor has prescribed medication(s) for BP, take that regularly.

What do I do now?

If you were **previously diagnosed** having high blood pressure by your healthcare provider, you should continue to follow their instruction on how to manage your high blood pressure.

If this is the first time you have learnt that you have high blood pressure, then you must contact your doctor and follow their instruction. If the Family Van staff inform you that you have very high blood pressure, they will help you get connected to your doctor or hospital.

Return next week to the Family Van for another blood pressure reading. If you smoke, try to stop smoking. Talk to The Family Van staff about getting help to stop smoking. Eat a diet high in fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Avoid fried foods. Exercise at least 30 minutes daily most or all days of the week. Try to control your stress through talking with someone, reading, or doing whatever helps you relax! **The Family Van is here to help you!**

Additional Resources

Talk to your doctor to get additional information. **This fact sheet provides only simplified information.**

The American Heart Association (www.americanheart.gov)

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure)

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