Blood Pressure

Your BLOOD PRESSURE constantly changes depending on activity, temperature, diet, emotional state, posture, physical state and medication use. Your blood pressure reading, which is made up of two numbers, shows how hard your heart is working. The systolic (or top number) is your pressure when the heart is pumping blood (or working), and the diastolic (or bottom number) is your pressure when the heart relaxes. If you have high blood pressure, or hypertension, your heart is working too hard. High blood pressure can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney failure or damage to your eyesight. Anyone—adults and children—can develop high blood pressure.

Many people who have high blood pressure do not know that they have it. Achieving better control of your blood pressure begins with knowing your numbers, so have your blood pressure checked routinely. It only takes a few minutes, but it could save your life. Work with your health care provider to learn what your numbers are, where they should be and how to reach or maintain the healthiest numbers for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYSTOLIC (Top Number)</th>
<th>DIASTOLIC (Bottom Number)</th>
<th>CLASSIFICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 120</td>
<td>Less than 80</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-139</td>
<td>80-90</td>
<td>Pre-hypertension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140-159</td>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>Hypertension, Stage 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 160</td>
<td>Greater than 100</td>
<td>Hypertension, Stage 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 180</td>
<td>Greater than 110</td>
<td>Severe Hypertension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Achieve Better Health Anytime, Anywhere
Better health is just a click away. Highmark members have access to **HealthMedia® CARE™ for Your Health**, an online digital health coaching program that includes a personalized action plan to help you learn important skills for managing high blood pressure. To enroll, go to [www.highmarkbcbs.com](http://www.highmarkbcbs.com) and log onto your Member Web site. Click on “Your Health,” followed by “Improve Your Health.”

While you’re logged on, take advantage of **WELLNESS DISCOUNTS**, and save up to 30% on wellness products, weight loss programs, and complementary and alternative medicine products and services. Log onto your Member Web site, then click on “Your Coverage,” followed by “Member Discounts.”
Five Steps to Better Control
Managing your blood pressure can help you achieve better health now and in the future. Follow these five steps to help control your blood pressure or prevent high blood pressure from developing.

1. Eat Right. Eat Light.
DASH Diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) research has shown that an overall healthy diet can help maintain healthy blood pressure levels. Eat right by choosing plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, which are rich in potassium and other important minerals, and limiting your salt use and consumption of high sodium foods. Eat light by balancing the calories you consume from food and drink with the calories you burn off through physical activity. Cut back by 250 to 500 calories per day to promote gradual weight loss, if you need to lose weight. Being overweight can raise your blood pressure, and losing weight may help you lower it. Weigh yourself regularly—about once per week—to monitor your progress.

Being physically inactive is related to high blood pressure, and physical activity can help to lower it. Move often by making physical activity part of your everyday routine, and move more by striving for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise almost daily or about 150 minutes weekly. If you are a beginner, start slowly and work up to this recommended level. Speak with your health care provider about safe levels of exercise for you.

Smoking and other tobacco use injures blood vessels and speeds up the process of hardening of the arteries. Smoking is also a major risk for heart disease and stroke, and quitting lowers your risk for both. If you smoke, take action to quit now. There are many resources available to help you quit for good. Find one or more that works for you—whatever it takes. Members can log onto the Highmark Member Web site at www.highmarkbcbs.com to enroll in HealthMedia® BREATHE™ under the “Your Health” tab, or call Smokeless® at 1-800-345-2476 to enroll in one of the telephonic Smokeless programs.

Try to seek balance in your life, and find ways to stress less. This isn’t an option—it’s necessary for optimal health. Stress, depression and hostility are directly associated with increased blood pressure. Make time to relax more (at least 10 to 20 minutes daily), and you’ll discover that you have more physical, emotional and mental energy throughout the day. Make it a mandatory appointment with yourself.

5. Manage Your Treatment Plan. Manage Your Medications.
If you develop high blood pressure, work with your health care provider to manage your treatment plan, including lifestyle changes, to help bring it under control. He or she may prescribe medications, so manage them carefully and take as directed. Speak with your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about your prescriptions, and continue regular health care visits to keep your blood pressure in check. If you have chronic conditions, like diabetes, that put you at risk for high blood pressure, work closely with your diabetes team to keep your blood pressure (and your diabetes) well-controlled.