

# Treating High Blood Pressure in People with Diabetes

An important part of taking care of yourself is managing your blood pressure. High blood pressure, also called hypertension, raises your risk for heart attack, stroke, eye problems, and kidney disease. As many as 2 out of 3 adults with diabetes have high blood pressure. You can prevent or delay diabetes problems by having your blood pressure checked regularly.

## What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood flow inside your blood vessels. If your blood moves through your vessels with too much force, you have high blood pressure.

When your health care team checks your blood pressure, they report it as 2 numbers, such as 120/80. You'll hear them say this as "120 over 80." Both numbers are important.

- The first number is the pressure as your heart beats and pushes blood through the blood vessels. It's called the "systolic" pressure.
- The second number is the pressure when the vessels relax between heartbeats. It's called the "diastolic" pressure.

Your heart has to work harder when blood pressure is high, and your risk for diabetes problems goes up. High blood pressure is a condition that won't go away without treatment.

## What should my blood pressure target be?

Both diabetes and high blood pressure raise your risk for heart attack, stroke, and eye and kidney disease. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends a target blood pressure of below 140/90 for people with diabetes. When you keep your blood pressure below 140/90, you'll help lower your risk for diabetes problems.

## How will I know if I have high blood pressure?

High blood pressure is a silent problem. You won't know you have it unless your health care provider checks your blood pressure. The ADA recommends that you have



Choosing foods wisely, being physically active, and taking medicines are all part of treating high blood pressure.

your blood pressure checked at every routine office visit. Keep track of your blood pressure by writing the results here.

ADA blood pressure target: Below 140/90		
Office Visit	My Results	My Target
Date:		
Date:		
Date:		
Date:		

## What should I do?

Both lifestyle changes and medicines help control blood pressure. Treatment varies from one person to the next. Some people can reach their blood pressure targets with lifestyle changes. Other people need medicines and lifestyle changes. Work with your health care provider to find a treatment that's right for you.

## Lifestyle changes

Lifestyle changes can help control your blood pressure, blood glucose (sugar), and blood lipid (cholesterol and triglyceride) levels. Place a check mark next to steps you're willing to try.

## Make wise food choices

- ☐ Try a DASH-style eating plan. Focus on including several servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Have at least one serving at each meal.
- ☐ Switch to low-fat or fat-free dairy products (such as fat-free milk, nonfat yogurt, and reduced-fat cheese).
- ☐ Select whole-grain, high-fiber foods such as 100% whole wheat bread, brown rice, and oats.
- ☐ Eat unsalted nuts and other healthy fats in small portions.
- ☐ Choose lean meats and meat substitutes (such as beans, lentils, fish, chicken or turkey without the skin, lean beef trimmed of visible fat, or pork tenderloin).
- ☐ Use healthy cooking methods that require less fat such as baking, roasting, broiling, or grilling.
- ☐ Add very little or no salt to your food during cooking and at the table.
- ☐ Season your food with salt-free herbs and spices instead of salt or try citrus juices or garlic.
- ☐ Use the nutrition labels to compare foods and choose those with less sodium.

## Lose weight or take steps to prevent weight gain

- ☐ Cut down on calories by limiting sugary drinks, sweets, and salty snacks. Focus on the foods listed above.
- ☐ Try to be more physically active than you are now.

## Be physically active

- ☐ If you feel unsure about your health, check with your health care provider before making big changes in your exercise plan.
- ☐ Aim for a total of about 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, most days of the week. In addition, do some sort of resistance training 2 or more times per week.

## Be careful with alcohol

- ☐ Talk with your health care team about whether it's wise to have alcoholic beverages.
- ☐ If you choose to drink, do so in moderation. Limit yourself to 1 serving a day (for women) or 2 servings a day (for men).

## If you smoke, quit smoking

- ☐ Talk with your health care team about how to quit.
- ☐ Go to a "quit-smoking" class.

## Medicines

Not everyone takes the same blood pressure medicine and many people take two or more medicines. The ones you take will depend on your blood pressure numbers and other factors.

- **ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors.** These medicines lower blood pressure by keeping your blood vessels relaxed. ACE inhibitors prevent a hormone called angiotensin from forming in your body and narrowing your blood vessels. These medicines also help protect your kidneys and reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- **ARBs (angiotensin receptor blockers).** These medicines keep the blood vessels open and relaxed to help lower blood pressure. Like ACE inhibitors, ARBs also protect your kidneys.
- **Beta blockers.** These medicines help lower blood pressure and relax your heart by allowing it to beat slower and with less force. Beta blockers help prevent heart attack and stroke.
- **Calcium channel blockers.** These medicines help the blood vessels relax by keeping calcium out of your blood vessels and heart.
- **Diuretics.** These medicines, sometimes called "water pills," help rid your body of extra water and sodium through urine.

Anyone with diabetes and blood pressure higher than 140/80 should take either an ACE inhibitor or ARB. People with diabetes and high blood pressure also may need a diuretic medicine. However, pregnant women should not take ACE inhibitors or ARBs. If you're pregnant, talk with your health care provider about what to do about high blood pressure.



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