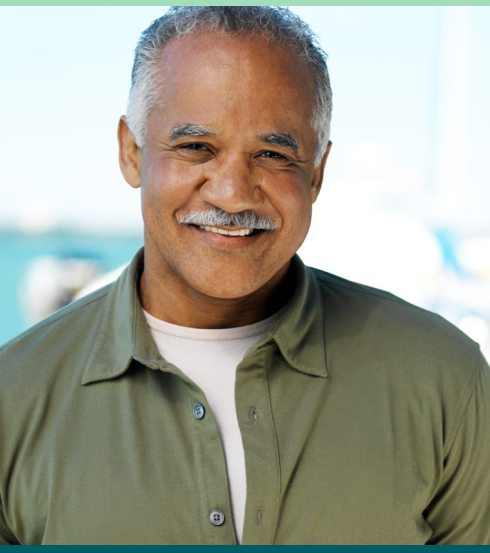


High Blood Pressure

How to Make Control Your Goal



Did you know?

Of the 67 million American adults who have high blood pressure, 16 million know they have the condition and are receiving treatment, but their blood pressure still remains too high.

African Americans are more likely to have high blood pressure (also called hypertension), which puts them at greater risk of dying from cardiovascular disease. About 2 out of every 5 African American adults have high blood pressure, and less than half of them have it under control.

It's up to you to successfully manage and control your blood pressure. But it doesn't have to be a daunting task. You can take small, manageable steps to make blood pressure control **your** goal. Here are some tips to show you how.

Engage your health care team

Blood pressure control is a team effort. Engage all of your health care professionals—not just your primary care physician or cardiologist. Your pharmacist, nurses, and other health care specialists can help you control your high blood pressure.

Next time you go in for a visit, make a list of questions you want to ask your health care professional. For example:

- ▶ What is my blood pressure goal?
- ▶ What are the best ways to reach my goal?
 - ▷ Mention what you're already doing to work toward control, including exercising, changing your diet, or taking medications as prescribed.
 - ▷ Be honest and realistic with yourself and your health care team about what lifestyle changes you're ready to make and the ones you're not quite ready for.
 - ▷ Pick one goal to start working toward. As you achieve success and build confidence, choose another goal to tackle.

Take your medications faithfully

Your health care team has put together a specific medication schedule to help control your blood pressure. You might forget to take your medicine every day, or maybe you're having trouble dealing with the side effects. Remember that your medication is important to control and maintain your blood pressure.

Here are some tips to help you stick with your medication plan:

- ▶ Talk to your doctor about any side effects you experience with your medications. If necessary, discuss other treatment options. **Never stop treatment on your own.**
- ▶ Make a schedule and set up a system to remind you to take your medications regularly—use a pillbox for every pill, every day, or use smartphone “app” reminders.
 - ▷ If your insurance provides mail order delivery, set it up and request a 90-day supply of medications.
 - ▷ If this service is not available, schedule all your refills at the same pharmacy at the same time each month so you can pick them up all at once.



Thelma's Story

Thelma was 30 years old when she was diagnosed with high blood pressure by chance through a free health fair screening for diabetes. Her screening raised concerns, and the screener connected her to a doctor who diagnosed her with both diabetes and high blood pressure. Although heart disease runs in her family, Thelma blamed herself for her high blood pressure. She knew she wasn't eating right or exercising and was letting the stress of marriage and children get to her. She knew she needed to get her blood pressure under control and committed to making lifestyle changes.

Now, Thelma stays active by walking, working out at the gym, and playing with her 1-year-old granddaughter. Every day, she and her husband work toward maintaining a healthy diet, aiming to limit how much sugar and salt they eat. Thelma takes her medications as prescribed and follows her doctor's treatment plan. With the support of her family and her doctor, Thelma made control her goal and is enjoying a healthier life.

Monitor your blood pressure

What's your blood pressure goal? Develop a plan to regularly check your blood pressure, not just at the doctor's office, but at home or at a pharmacy. Track your results in a log or diary to monitor your progress.

Make healthy choices

- ▶ Exercise can be a great way to help control your blood pressure. Find a safe place to walk or be more active. Increase the time and intensity of your physical activity as you progress.
- ▶ Shop for more fresh fruit, vegetables, and whole grains and fewer prepared foods with high sodium, cholesterol, saturated fat, and trans fat.
- ▶ Learn to read labels and choose foods lower in sodium. Lowering your sodium will lower your blood pressure.
- ▶ Quit smoking. About 1 in 5 African American adults smokes cigarettes. There are many tools available to help you. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit **Smokefree.gov** for help.

Tools and resources

Million Hearts®, in partnership with the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, has developed online tools to help you track and manage your heart health, including your blood pressure, and provide helpful advice and information. Check out:

- ▶ **Heart360®**
- ▶ **My Life Check®**

Find and download additional materials to help control your high blood pressure at the **Million Hearts®** website.

Million Hearts® is a national initiative to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. It is led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, two agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services.

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