

# 10 Ways to Keep Your Blood Pressure at a Healthy Level



**1 Make your doctor your partner for good health.** Follow their advice.



**2 Lose extra pounds.** Your doctor can tell you if you are at a healthy weight. Extra weight, especially around the waist, can raise blood pressure.



**3 Exercise.** Being active 30 to 40 minutes a day most days can lower blood pressure. This can also keep blood pressure that is a little too high from rising more. You have to stay at it, or blood pressure can go back up.

Best types of exercise to lower blood pressure are ones that get your heart pumping, such as walking, jogging, swimming, bicycling, or dancing. Ask your doctor about the best exercise for you.



**4 Eat healthy.** This can lower blood pressure as much as 14 points.

- ◆ **The foods to eat.** Eat mainly whole grains, tree nuts, lean meats, skinless chicken, turkey, and fish; lots of vegetables, and fruit once a day. Avoid foods high in saturated fats and sugars.
- ◆ **Cut down on salt (sodium).** Even cutting back a little can lower blood pressure. Keep sodium under 1,500 mg a day. Too much salt is hardest on African Americans, people over 50, or those who have diabetes or kidney disease.
- ◆ **Be a health-smart shopper.** Choose fresh foods over canned, packaged, deli, or pre-made. Those can be high in fat, sugar, and salt. Read food labels.
- ◆ **Keep a food diary.** Try this for one week: write down what and how much you eat and why. What you learn can help you make better food choices.



**5 Limit the alcohol.** Too much can raise blood pressure.



**6 Quit smoking.** Smoking raises blood pressure. If you quit, you will lower your blood pressure and your risk for many serious health conditions.



**7 Try cutting back on caffeine.** Some people are sensitive to caffeine. Check your blood pressure within 30 minutes of drinking a beverage with caffeine to see how it affects you.



**8 Reduce stress.** Know what is causing stress in your life. Find healthy ways to cope or solve problems. Take time to relax, laugh, and enjoy life as much as possible.



**9 Check your blood pressure.** You cannot feel high blood pressure. A test is the only way to know for sure. This tells you if healthy habits are making a difference. You can get it checked at a drug store or buy a home test kit. A pharmacist can help you learn how to use it.



**10 Take your meds.** If you take blood pressure meds, take it just as your doctor told you to.