

# Blood Pressure



Blood pressure is the force of blood against artery walls. It is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg) and recorded as two numbers — systolic pressure (as the heart beats) over diastolic pressure (as the heart relaxes between beats). Both numbers are important.

Blood pressure rises and falls throughout the day. Your doctor may take several readings over time before making a judgment about high blood pressure. When it stays elevated over time, it's called high blood pressure.

High blood pressure (hypertension) is dangerous because it makes the heart work too hard, and the force of its blood flow can harm arteries. High blood pressure often has no symptoms. Once it occurs, it usually lasts a lifetime. Uncontrolled, it can lead to heart and kidney disease and stroke.

## Blood Pressure Levels (for Adults\*)

Category	Systolic	AND	Diastolic	Results
Normal	Less than 120	AND	Less than 80	Great! Be sure to check again in one year.
Elevated	120-129	AND	Less than 80	Consider lifestyle change, and reassess in 3-6 months.
Hypertension	130 or higher	OR	80 or higher	You have high blood pressure. Please see your healthcare provider.

\* For adults ages 18 and older who are not on medicine for high blood pressure and do not have a short-term serious illness.  
 + If systolic and diastolic pressures fall into different categories, overall status is the higher category.

**Source:** 2017 Guidelines for Diagnosing, Treating and Living with High Blood Pressure, American Heart Association (AHA)  
 Published: Nov. 13, 2017

### To prevent or control blood pressure, take these steps:



Maintain a healthy weight.



Be physically active.



Follow a healthy eating plan, which includes foods lower in salt.



Don't smoke — if you do, stop. Need help quitting? Call NDQuits at 1.800.784.8669 (QUIT NOW), or log on at [www.ndhealth.gov/ndquits](http://www.ndhealth.gov/ndquits).



If you have high blood pressure and are prescribed medication, take it as directed.