

LOWERING THE LIMITS!

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT BLOOD PRESSURE

New blood pressure guidelines have been published by JNC 7.

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is a reading that indicates how much pressure is being exerted on the walls of the blood vessels.

The upper number or *systolic* indicates the pressure when the heart is contracting or working.

The lower number or *diastolic* is the pressure when the heart is at rest.

The new guidelines are as follows:

Normal blood pressure (or *BP*) is now considered **less than 120/80**

Pre-hypertension is 120 to 139 for systolic (*upper number*).
80 to 89 for diastolic (*lower number*).

Hypertension is 140/90 and greater.

Why is it important to maintain blood pressure within a normal range?

Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure.

According to recent estimates, nearly one in three U.S. adults has high blood pressure, but because there are no symptoms nearly 1/3 of these people don't know they have it. In fact, many people have high blood pressure for years without knowing it. This is why high blood pressure is often called the "silent killer".

The only way to tell if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked.

What can be done to manage high blood pressure?

Lots! The following pages provide information on how to manage high blood pressure, scroll down.

You can also visit the American Heart Association web site

www.americanheart.org



Managing High Blood Pressure

The way to manage high blood pressure is to make healthy lifestyle choices about:

- ✓What you eat and drink
- ✓Exercising regularly
- ✓Keeping your weight within a healthy range
- ✓Not smoking
- ✓Taking your medicine, if you need to

What you eat and drink

You need to follow a diet that is **low in**:

- ✓Fats, Saturated fats, Cholesterol
- ✓Sodium (salt)
- ✓Alcohol (no more than 2 drinks a day for and 1 for women)
- ✓Caffeine

And rich in:

- ✓Fruits and vegetables
 - ✓Fiber
 - ✓Protein
 - ✓Calcium, potassium and magnesium
- Research has shown that what you eat and drink has direct influence on high blood pressure.



Exercising regularly

Although you need to **talk with your doctor before you begin any exercise plan**, being active is a step in managing your high blood pressure.

The best kinds of exercise are aerobic, like:

- ✓ Brisk walking
- ✓ Running
- ✓Swimming
- ✓Jumping rope

Doing aerobic exercise every day can help lower your risk for heart disease. If every day is not possible, try to do 30 minutes of exercise 3 – 4 days a week. Even light exercise, if done each day, can help lower your risk for heart disease.



Keeping your weight in a healthy range



As your body weight increases, your blood pressure rises. If you are overweight, your doctor will most likely advise you to loose weight.

To do this, you need to use up more calories than you eat.

Not smoking

One of the best things you can do for your heart is to not smoke. Smoking makes your blood vessels constrict (tighten), making your blood pressure worse. It also lowers your “good” cholesterol (HDL). If you have high blood pressure and smoke, your risks for heart and lung disease are **doubled**. Smoke from someone else’s tobacco (second hand smoke) is bad for your, too.



There are smoking cessation classes available in the county.

Contact the public health nurse or Benton Medical Clinic for more information

Taking medicine if you need to

When changes in your eating habits and other lifestyle changes don’t help lower your blood pressure, medicine may be needed.

You may be given one or more drugs to treat high blood pressure and it is important that you **take them when you should and as you should**. The best treatment is to keep your blood pressure level and not have it going up and down all the time. To do this, your body needs the effect of the drug 24 hours a day. Your medicine plan is designed to give you this.

If you have any side effects from taking any medicine, tell your doctor right away. The medicine or the dosage may need to be changed. Sometimes, you may have to try several drugs before finding the right one or ones for you. But, don’t stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to.

When you have high blood pressure, you should **talk with your doctor before you take any over-the-counter drugs**. Some of these contain certain ingredients or medicines that may interact or interfere with the medicine you are taking.

