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**Ten Ways to Control Your Blood Pressure**

Blood pressure is a measurement of the force of pressure your blood puts on artery walls. When this pressure remains high for an extended period, it’s considered high blood pressure. About one in three adults (more than 67 million Americans) have hypertension—another name for high blood pressure. Hypertension is sometimes called the silent killer because many people who have high blood pressure might not know it.

By taking steps to prevent or reduce high blood pressure, you can lower your risk for stroke, heart attack, heart failure, and kidney damage. Here are ten things you can do to keep your blood pressure in check:

1. **Create a management plan.** Ask your doctor to help you develop a plan to manage your blood pressure. Your doctor can give you advice specific to your needs and lifestyle.
2. **Take blood pressure medication as prescribed.** If your doctor prescribes blood pressure medication, take it as instructed. If you don’t like the way your medication makes you feel, tell your doctor. Work together to find the best medication for you.
3. **Reduce your stress.** Yoga, breathing techniques, organizing your hectic schedule—these are a few ways to help you reduce stress, which has many health benefits. In fact, the American Heart Association says that studies for meditation to reduce blood pressure are promising. Do your heart a favor and carve out 20 – 30 minutes each day to meditate and relax.
4. **Move more.** Participating in 30 or more minutes of moderate physical activity on most days not only helps to lower blood pressure, it also helps relieve stress and manage weight.
5. **DASH out unhealthy eating habits.** Lower your blood pressure by following the DASH eating plan (dietary approaches to stop hypertension). This plan limits foods that are high in fat (especially saturated fat), sodium, and sugar, and includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, poultry, fish, whole grains, nuts, and low-fat dairy. The DASH eating plan is more effective than simply reducing sodium, or adding fruits and vegetables. You can download a free copy of the DASH booklet from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute at [Catalog.nhlbi.nih.gov/catalog/product/Your-Guide-to-Lowering-Your-Blood-Pressure-with-DASH/06-4082](http://catalog.nhlbi.nih.gov/catalog/product/Your-Guide-to-Lowering-Your-Blood-Pressure-with-DASH/06-4082).
6. **Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.** Oftentimes, as your weight increases, so does your blood pressure. Reducing your weight until you are in a healthy range is ideal, but even a loss of five percent of body weight lowers blood pressure. Following the DASH eating plan and getting regular physical activity will help.
7. **Toss the tobacco.** There are a lot of health benefits that result from quitting tobacco use. Lowering your blood pressure is just another health perk you can add to your list when you quit.
8. **Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.** Too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure. For overall health, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends no more than one alcoholic beverage per day for women, and no more than two per day for men.
9. **Check your blood pressure regularly.** Keeping track of your blood pressure is a great way to make sure you’re aware if it starts to rise. A reading of 120/80 or lower is ideal for healthy adults, if you have a health condition, talk to your doctor about your blood pressure goal. Early awareness empowers you to adjust your health habits before your blood pressure gets out of control.
10. **Enable a support system.** If you have a family member or friend with high blood pressure, you can help each other by taking these preventive steps together.

*Sources: WebMD.com, American Heart Association*

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