

Diabetes: How to Manage Your Blood Pressure



High blood pressure is common in people who have diabetes. It can damage your heart, your blood vessels, and other parts of your body.

Controlling your blood pressure is one way you can help manage your diabetes.

Diabetes raises your risk for having other health problems, such as heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. If you also have high blood pressure, lowering your blood pressure may help you prevent these problems.

Your blood pressure goal

You will not feel any symptoms when your blood pressure is too high, so make sure to get it checked regularly. Your doctor can help you decide the best and safest blood pressure level.

Checking your blood pressure

Regular blood pressure checks can help you and your doctor know how close you are to your goal.

If you take medicines for high blood pressure, these checks help your doctor see if you need to change your medicines.

Ask your doctor how often you should check your blood pressure. You can have it checked during visits to the doctor's office. Or your doctor may want you to check it at home. Many pharmacies give free blood pressure checks.

Healthy lifestyle changes

You can help manage high blood pressure by making healthy lifestyle changes. You also may need to take medicines to help you reach your blood pressure goal.

Healthy eating

Healthy eating can help you control your blood pressure. Talk to your doctor or a dietitian about making changes in your diet. For example:

- Eat low-fat meals with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy foods. This is called Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, or the DASH diet.
- Cut back on salt. Try to cut back on processed foods, salty snacks, and canned soups.
- Avoid or limit alcohol.

Activity

Becoming more active also can help you control your blood pressure.

Try to be active for at least 2½ hours a week. One way to do this is to be active 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week. Do things that get your heart rate up. You can:

- Walk or bike.
- Do yard work, mow the lawn, or garden.
- Do housework, like sweeping or vacuuming.
- Swim or do water aerobics.

Healthy weight

Getting active and eating healthy foods can help you reach and stay at a healthy weight. This may help you lower your blood pressure and manage your diabetes.

Medicines for controlling blood pressure

Along with lifestyle changes, you may need to take medicines to reach your blood pressure goal.

Medicines for high blood pressure include:

- **ACE inhibitors.** These relax your blood vessels, which can lower your blood pressure.

- **Angiotensin II receptor blockers, or ARBs.** These also relax your blood vessels. They may be given if ACE inhibitors cause side effects, such as coughing.
- **Diuretics.** These lower your blood pressure by getting rid of extra salt and water in your body.
- **Beta-blockers.** These lower your heart rate and the amount of blood your heart pumps, which lowers your blood pressure.
- **Calcium channel blockers.** These relax and widen your blood vessels, which lowers your blood pressure.

You may take more than one blood pressure medicine to help you reach your goal. Your doctor may adjust your medicines or your dose based on your blood pressure checks.

Questions to ask your doctor

List your questions or concerns below. Take this sheet with you to your next doctor visit.

Questions about how to manage blood pressure: