

# blood pressure

## Blood Pressure

### What's Up?

Have you had your blood pressure (BP) checked recently? A reading of 120 over 80 is now classified as prehypertension and an indicator of future high blood pressure (hypertension).

Because hypertension has no obvious symptoms, routine BP checks become important after age 50 when risk increases. Your provider can determine the frequency of these checks.

Risk also increases if you are overweight, diabetic, or of African-American descent, or if you smoke or abuse alcohol.

### For a Healthy BP:

- **Reduce Excess Weight** – losing just 8-10 pounds reduces demand on the heart.
- **Quit Smoking** – it raises BP and risk of heart attack.
- **Limit Alcohol Use** – more than 1-2 drinks a day can raise BP.
- **Eat 5-9 Daily Servings of Fruits & Vegetables** – they contain substances that may help control BP.
- **Stay Active** – exercise can strengthen your heart and control weight.
- **Avoid Excess Salt** – it can elevate BP.



### At Risk For Stroke? Learn the signs.

Stroke occurs when the blood supply to a part of the brain is suddenly blocked. A stroke can cause disabling paralysis or loss of speech or vision. Fortunately, today's medical care makes it easier to prevent and treat stroke.

### Risk Factors for Stroke:

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Lack of exercise
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Alcohol abuse

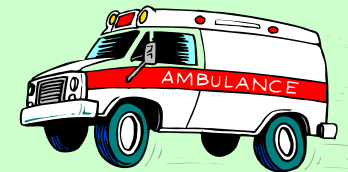
### 5 Warning Signs of Stroke

**Promptly call 9-1-1 if these symptoms suddenly appear:**

- 1 Vision loss, partial or total
- 2 Headache, usually severe
- 3 Speech difficulty or confusion
- 4 Walking difficulty, dizziness or blacking out
- 5 Numbness or weakness in the face, arm, or leg, usually on one side of the body

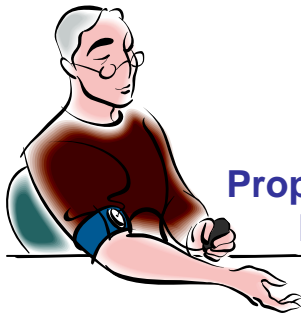
New emergency treatments for stroke may save life and limb if given quickly, within a few hours of onset.

**Act Fast! Don't delay!**



**Take your medicine!** If your provider prescribes BP medication, taking it properly is very important. Left untreated, high blood pressure (hypertension) can lead to heart attack, stroke, and kidney disease.

**FOR MORE INFO VISIT → [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)**



## Blood Pressure Control QUICK GUIDE

### Proper Blood Pressure Self/Home Monitoring Technique

- Check your blood pressure every morning.
- Urinate/Void First – A full bladder may cause your reading to be higher.
- Avoid caffeine/cigarettes before checking your blood pressure.
- Sit and relax for 5-10 minutes. Breathe calmly.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor.
- No talking or laughing during the procedure.
- Rest your arm on a table at the level of your heart.
- Use the same arm, technique, and timeframe (within 1 hour) every day.
- Recheck your blood pressure at least 4 hours after taking your medications.
- Write down every blood pressure and pulse reading, or track it using MyHealthVet ([www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)).

### Medication Reminder

- Take your medications as prescribed.
- Take only medications prescribed for YOU.
- Make sure that you are taking the prescribed dose.
- Do not adjust your medication dosages without notifying your doctor.
- Take your medications at the same time (within 1 hour) every day.
- Notify your provider if you are also taking herbal supplements. Severe interactions can occur.
- Don't miss taking your medication. Register with MyHealthVet to refill your prescriptions online.

FOR MORE INFO VISIT → [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

### Warning Signs of a Heart Attack

- Severe pain or pressure in the chest. May radiate to the arms, throat, jaw, or back. NOTE: Women and diabetics may not experience chest pain.
- May have nausea and vomiting with weakness.
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Difficulty breathing



***If you, or someone you know, experience the warning signs listed above, CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY!***

### Dietary Quick Guide

- Eat whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Opt for fresh or frozen vegetables. If using canned vegetables, rinse and drain them before cooking.
- Eat small portions of lean meats, poultry, and fish.
- Replace salt with herbs and other seasonings such as parsley, basil, ginger, garlic, onions, etc.
- Avoid processed, high sodium foods such as cured meats (i.e. bacon, deli meats, boxed foods).
- Avoid greasy, fatty, and fried foods.

### Physical Activity Tips

***NOTE! ALWAYS check with your doctor before beginning any exercise program!***

- Get moving! Walking is great exercise and is appropriate for just about any fitness level.
- Bypass the elevator and take the stairs.

FOR MORE INFO VISIT → [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov)