



*"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."  
Psalm 37:5*

**May is High Blood Pressure Education Month.** To take care of your heart, it's important to know and track your blood pressure (BP). Millions of Americans have high BP, also called hypertension, but many don't realize it or aren't keeping it at a healthy level.

For most adults, a healthy BP is 120/80 millimeters of mercury or less. Blood pressure consistently above 130/80 millimeters of mercury increases your risk for heart disease, kidney disease, eye damage, dementia and stroke. High BP is often "silent," meaning it doesn't usually cause symptoms but can damage your body, especially your heart over time.



## 8 Ways to Reach a Healthy Blood Pressure:

**1. Know Your Numbers.** Everyone ages 3 and older should get their BP checked by a health care provider at least once a year.

**2. Eat Healthy.** Follow a heart-healthy eating plan, such as NHLBI's Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH). For example, use herbs for flavor instead of salt and add one fruit or vegetable to every meal.

**3. Move More.** Get at least 2 1/2 hours of physical activity each week to help lower and control BP. Any amount of physical activity is better than none and all activity counts.

**4. Aim for a Healthy Weight.** If you're overweight, losing just 3-5% of your weight can improve BP. If you weigh 200 pounds, that's a loss of 6-10 pounds.

**5. Manage Stress.** Stress can increase your blood pressure and make your body store more fat. Reduce stress with meditation, prayer, relaxing activities or support from a counselor or online group.

**6. Have a Healthy Pregnancy.** High BP during pregnancy can harm the mother and baby. Talk to your health care provider about high blood pressure, and if you're planning to become pregnant, start monitoring it now.

**7. Stop Smoking.** The chemicals in tobacco smoke can harm your heart and blood vessels. Seek out resources, such as smoke free hotlines and text message programs, that offer free support and information.

**8. Work with Your Doctor.** Get help setting your target BP. Write down your numbers every time you get your BP checked. Ask if you should monitor your blood pressure from home. Take all prescribed medications as directed and keep up your healthy lifestyle. If seeing a doctor worries you, ask to have your BP taken more than once during a visit to get an accurate reading.

### Expert advice for accurate BP readings:

30 minutes before your test, don't exercise, drink caffeine or smoke cigarettes. Right before, go to the bathroom. During the test, rest your arm on a table at the level of your heart and put your feet flat on the floor. Relax and don't talk.

To find more information about high blood pressure, visit [nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension).