

Be Good to Your Heart

Tips for everyday diabetes self-care





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Live your life around wellness.

People with diabetes have a greater risk of developing hypertension, which is also called high blood pressure. Practice good wellness habits to keep your blood glucose and blood pressure under control by eating a healthy diet, taking medication on a regular basis and becoming physically active.

Know your blood pressure.

If you don't know what your blood pressure is or if it's too high, you should get it checked by a healthcare provider. If left untreated, high blood pressure can make many of the complications of diabetes worse – and it puts you at a greater risk for heart attacks, strokes, vision loss and kidney problems.

Be informed.

Learning about your risk for hypertension is just the first step. This guidebook offers advice about what you can do to prevent high blood pressure or control it as part of your overall diabetes management.

3 *What do my numbers mean?*



What is blood pressure?

Important to know...

- *Hypertension affects 50 million Americans, or 30 percent of the adult population.*
- *50 percent of people with type 2 diabetes also had hypertension at the time of their diagnosis.*
- *Nearly 75 percent of adults with diabetes take medications for high blood pressure or have a blood pressure of more than 130/80.*

As your heart pumps blood through your body, pressure is applied to the walls of your arteries. If you have normal blood pressure, your blood is circulating easily throughout your body. But if you have high blood pressure, your heart is working extra hard – and this can cause many health problems.

The size of your blood vessels can change throughout your day and your life. If your blood vessels become narrow, the pressure inside the vessel increases, causing hypertension. Some things, like stress, can make your blood vessels narrow temporarily, but other factors, like what you eat, your lifestyle and your genetics, can make them narrow with more long-term effects.

Symptoms of hypertension may include:

- Headaches
- Blurry vision
- Chest pain
- Urinating more than once during the night

However, most people with high blood pressure don't even know they have a problem. You might not have any of these signs, so the only way to know for sure if you have high blood pressure is to get it checked.

What do my numbers mean?

Your blood pressure is recorded as a set of two numbers: systolic pressure over diastolic pressure. The top number is the systolic pressure, and it represents the maximum pressure exerted when the heart contracts. The bottom number is the diastolic pressure, which measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is at rest. The first number (systolic) is generally greater than the second (diastolic).

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A normal blood pressure reading is less than 120/80.

Do you know your blood pressure? If so, record it here:

_____ / _____

Today's date is: _____. The time is: _____.

To find out what your blood pressure reading is, go to a local drugstore pharmacy or ask your healthcare provider to check it at your next appointment.

My co-worker and I walk every day at lunch for 30 minutes. After a month, my blood pressure rate went from 130/90 to 120/70.



When is my blood pressure too high?

Anyone with blood pressure that is more than 140/90 has hypertension. If you have diabetes or kidney disease, your blood pressure is considered high if it is more than 130/80.

If your reading is in the range between 120-139/80-89, then your blood pressure is slightly high – this is called prehypertension. If you don't take action, prehypertension will likely turn into high blood pressure.

If your reading is in the range between 140-159/90-99, then you have an early form of high blood pressure referred to as Stage 1 Hypertension. Stage 1 Hypertension requires treatment with medication along with lifestyle changes.

A reading of greater than or equal to 160/100 is a serious form of hypertension called Stage 2 Hypertension, which requires immediate treatment.



Checking my blood pressure regularly helps my diabetes care team develop my treatment plan.



American Heart Association Recommended Blood Pressure Levels

BP Classification	Systolic BP		Diastolic BP
Normal	< 120	and	<80
Prehypertension	120-139	or	80-89
Stage 1 Hypertension	140-159	or	90-99
Stage 2 Hypertension	≥ 160	or	≥ 100

Using a home blood pressure monitor

A blood pressure reading is a standard part of your regular medical checkup.

If you have high blood pressure, your healthcare provider may suggest that you take your blood pressure reading at home, in between your regular appointments. By keeping track of it in a log, you and your healthcare provider can tell how much your blood pressure changes

during the day and see how well your medicine is working to control your high blood pressure.

Ask your healthcare provider to recommend a blood pressure monitor that is best for you. Also, ask him/her to check your monitor for accuracy, to show you how to use it correctly and to make sure that you are using the right cuff size.

What can I do to prevent or control my high blood pressure?



While you cannot change your age, gender or family medical history, you can control or modify lifestyle risk factors for high blood pressure, including:

- Poor eating habits
- Too much alcohol
- Smoking
- Limited or no exercise

Since it's up to you to take care of yourself, it helps to focus on seven healthy behaviors that can keep your diabetes in control and have a positive impact on your blood pressure.

My mom's high blood pressure has prompted me to develop healthier habits.

Healthy meals help keep my blood pressure in check.



The American Association of Diabetes Educators (AADE) has identified seven self-care behaviors, called the AADE7™, that will help you manage your diabetes and can help delay or prevent the onset of hypertension.



1 Healthy Eating

Use these tips for eating healthy meals that are good for your diabetes management as well as for keeping your blood pressure under control. Remember, your diabetes educator or dietitian can help you develop an eating plan that is right for you.

- **Eat a heart-healthy diet.** Follow an eating plan that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, grains, beans, low-fat dairy products and lean meats. Moderate your intake of sodium, alcohol, saturated fats and cholesterol.
- **Reduce your use of sodium** (salt) to no more than 2,400 mg or about a teaspoon's worth of salt each day. Read food labels to choose foods that are low in sodium. Avoid canned, processed, convenience and fast foods that are generally higher in sodium than fresh foods.
- **Watch your serving sizes.** Learn how to recognize proper portion sizes. Eat off of smaller dishes, share a dessert and remove serving dishes from the table to avoid second helpings.
- **Drink alcohol in moderation.** For men, that means a maximum of two drinks a day, for women, a maximum of one drink.
- **Find your healthy weight.** Talk to your doctor about how much you should weigh and how many pounds you need to lose. Losing even 10 to 20 pounds can help you manage your diabetes and lower your risk of developing high blood pressure.
- **Learn to read food labels.** Get the nutrition facts behind the foods you eat. Learn to become comfortable with the terms: calories, fats and carbohydrates.

*Now more than ever,
I make time for myself.*



2 Being Active

Increased physical activity is key for managing your diabetes and keeping your blood pressure within the normal range. Talk with your healthcare provider to assess your current fitness level, especially if you have been inactive for six months or more. Your diabetes educator can help you develop an appropriate plan that balances your diet and medications with your activity level. They can also help you overcome physical and motivational obstacles.

- **Create a fitness plan.** Decide what you want to accomplish. If you are exercising mainly to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, 30 minutes or so a day will work if you're careful about how much you eat.
- **Build a program.** Consider your needs and abilities, keeping in mind your available time and the activities you enjoy. If you don't like walking, any activity that makes your heart work harder will be okay, as long as you do it long enough and often enough.
- **Recruit a friend.** It's more fun with a family member, friend or co-worker who offers support and motivation.
- **Start moving!** Start with something easy like walking for 10 minutes a few days a week, and slowly build from there. Choose an activity you enjoy and are likely to want to continue.
- **Measure your progress.** Keep a log of your efforts. Review your short- and long-term accomplishments to make adjustments, award your achievements and keep yourself motivated.

3 Monitoring

Be sure to follow the recommendations of your diabetes care team – your doctor, diabetes educator and any physician specialists – to routinely check and record your blood glucose levels and to monitor your blood pressure.

In addition, get regular medical checkups and regular eye, foot and dental examinations to reduce complications from diabetes and high blood pressure and to maximize your health and your quality of life. An important part of diabetes self-care is learning to understand, seek and regularly obtain an array of preventive services.

4 Taking Medications

Talk with your doctor and diabetes educator about the importance of taking medications for your diabetes and high blood pressure. Learn how they work alone and together to maintain your health. Teach a family member about each medication you take so they can support you and remind you to take them as prescribed.

There are several medications available for the treatment of high blood pressure. You should work closely with your doctor and pharmacist to find the right medication or combination for you. Remember to contact your doctor, diabetes educator or pharmacist if side effects interfere with your lifestyle or cause you discomfort.

Remember...

If you're having trouble remembering to take your medications consider these suggestions.

- **Set an alarm – watch, cell phone, office calendar – to prompt you.**
- **Use a day-of-the-week pill organizer.**
- **Make a habit of taking them when you watch your favorite TV show or the news.**

5 Problem Solving

Planning ahead and being aware of problems that may arise is a smart approach to life for everyone. It is particularly beneficial to people with diabetes and other health-related issues. Consider these tips on how to manage your condition if you plan to travel:

- Order enough medication to cover your needs during travel, including a backup supply.
- Pack some of your medications in your luggage, and keep some with you on your flight or in the car, in case you get separated from your luggage.
- Keep written prescriptions on hand in case you need emergency refills.
- Make a list with names and contact information of your doctor(s) and pharmacist. Include medication brand names, generic names and dosages on the list.

6 Reducing Risk

It's likely that you already know what your unhealthy habits are, and you know that you need to take action to correct them. Even if you can't tackle all of your risky behaviors at once, pick one to work on. While the most important person managing your diabetes is you, your diabetes educator can help develop a plan for changing unhealthy habits.

Learn to take care of your diabetes and high blood pressure by taking these precautions:

- Quit smoking.
- Eat a diet that promotes health and wellness and that is low in sodium.
- Learn to deal with stress by doing activities you enjoy.
- Take your medications as prescribed.
- Get regular medical exams, including ones for your eyes, feet and teeth.
- Know your body and recognize when you are not feeling well, so you can contact members of your diabetes care team, if necessary.

7 Healthy Coping

Everyone gets discouraged, frustrated, angry, and stressed at one time or another. If you have a chronic illness, sometimes these emotions can get overwhelming. These feelings and others are a natural part of life, but it's important to learn to cope with your feelings in healthy ways. Remember that you are not alone; there are many people – your healthcare team, family and friends – who can help you deal with the emotional effects of your health.

We're in this together.



Frustrated? Stressed? Tired of Managing Your Health?

Here are some tips to help get you through:

- *Think of three things you can do to control your situation. Talk to your diabetes educator about your feelings at your next appointment.*
- *Do something physical to clear your head. Go for a short walk or do some simple stretches.*
- *Dig deep to find out why you feel the way you do and the reasons behind it. Write down your feelings, wait at least 24 hours and then read it again. If you are still upset, talk to a friend or loved one.*
- *Breathe. Take long deep breaths to calm your spirit. Listen to your favorite music or spend some quality time with your pet.*

Be good to yourself.

Use the space on these pages to capture important information that will help you maintain a healthy hypertension-free lifestyle.

Health Information

My Physician

NAME _____

PHONE _____

My Diabetes Educator

NAME _____

PHONE _____

My Prescriptions (include dosage information)

My Blood Pressure (include reading and date)

_____ / _____ _____

_____ / _____ _____

_____ / _____ _____

_____ / _____ _____

_____ / _____ _____

_____ / _____ _____

Personal Thoughts

List three things you can do to be good to yourself.

What physical activities do you enjoy? Jot down a few favorites.

Write a few thoughts on how you can modify your diet.

List any questions you have about your health. Discuss these with your doctor and diabetes educator.



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