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High Blood Pressure

Also called: Benign essential hypertension, Essential hypertension, HBP, HTN, Hypertension

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Summary

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. Each time your heart beats, it pumps blood into the arteries. Your blood pressure is highest when your heart beats, pumping the blood. This is called systolic pressure. When your heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is called diastolic pressure.

Your blood pressure reading uses these two numbers. Usually the systolic number comes before or above the diastolic number. For example, 120/80 means a systolic of 120 and a diastolic of 80.

How do I know if I have high blood pressure?

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms. So the only way to find out if you have it is to get regular blood pressure checks from your health care provider. Your provider will use a gauge, a stethoscope or electronic sensor, and a blood pressure cuff. He or she will take two or more readings at separate appointments before making a diagnosis.

You have high blood pressure if your readings show that

- Your systolic is 140 or higher **OR**
- Your diastolic is 90 or higher

Some providers may consider you to have high blood pressure if you have other heart risk factors and

- Your systolic is between 130 and 139 **OR**
- Your diastolic is between 80 and 89

Blood pressure readings above 180 /120 are dangerously high and require immediate medical attention.

For children and teens, the health care provider compares the blood pressure reading to what is normal for other kids who are the same age, height, and gender.

What are the different types of high blood pressure?

There are two main types of high blood pressure: primary and secondary high blood pressure.

- **Primary**, or essential, high blood pressure is the most common type of high blood pressure. For most people who get this kind of blood pressure, it develops over time as you get older.
- **Secondary** high blood pressure is caused by another medical condition or use of certain medicines. It usually gets better after you treat that condition or stop taking the medicines that are causing it.

Why do I need to worry about high blood pressure?

When your blood pressure stays high over time, it causes the heart to pump harder and work overtime, possibly leading to serious health problems such as **heart attack**, **stroke**, **heart failure**, and **kidney failure**.

What are the treatments for high blood pressure?

Treatments for high blood pressure include [heart-healthy lifestyle changes](#) and [medicines](#). You will work with your provider to come up with a treatment plan. It may include only the lifestyle changes. These changes, such as heart-healthy eating and exercise, can be very effective. But sometimes the changes do not control or lower your high blood pressure. Then you may need to take medicine. There are different types of blood pressure medicines. Some people need to take more than one type.

If your high blood pressure is caused by another medical condition or medicine, treating that condition or stopping the medicine may lower your blood pressure.

NIH: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Start Here

- [Blood Pressure Matters: Keep Hypertension in Check](#) (National Institutes of Health)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [High Blood Pressure](#) (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [High Blood Pressure \(Hypertension\) Easy-to-Read](#) (Food and Drug Administration)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [What Is High Blood Pressure?](#) (American Heart Association)

Diagnosis and Tests

- [Blood Pressure Test](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- [Chloride Blood Test](#) (National Library of Medicine)Also in [Spanish](#)

Prevention and Risk Factors

- [How to Prevent High Blood Pressure: MedlinePlus Health Topic](#) (National Library of Medicine)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Mind Your Risks](#) (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)

Treatments and Therapies

- [Blood Pressure Medicines: MedlinePlus Health Topic](#) (National Library of Medicine)Also in [Spanish](#)

Living With

- [DASH Diet: MedlinePlus Health Topic](#) (National Library of Medicine)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Get the Most Out of Home Blood Pressure Monitoring](#)(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Shaking the Salt Habit](#) (American Heart Association)
- [Understanding Blood Pressure Readings](#) (American Heart Association)

Related Issues

- [Anxiety: A Cause of High Blood Pressure?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Blood Pressure vs. Heart Rate](#) (American Heart Association)
- [Blood Pressure: Does It Have a Daily Pattern?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Blood Pressure: Is It Affected by Cold Weather?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Common High Blood Pressure Myths](#) (American Heart Association)

- [High Blood Pressure and Cold Remedies: Which Are Safe?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research) Also in [Spanish](#)
- [High Blood Pressure and Kidney Disease](#)  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases) Also in [Spanish](#)
- [High Blood Pressure and Sex: Overcome the Challenges](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research) Also in [Spanish](#)
- [High Blood Pressure, Afib and Your Risk of Stroke](#) (American Heart Association)
- [How High Blood Pressure Can Lead to Stroke](#) (American Heart Association)
- [Pulse Pressure: An Indicator of Heart Health?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- [Stress and High Blood Pressure: What's the Connection?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research) Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Weightlifting: Bad for Your Blood Pressure?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research) Also in [Spanish](#)
- [White-Coat Hypertension: When Blood Pressure Rises at the Doctor's Office](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- [Wrist Blood Pressure Monitors: Are They Accurate?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research) Also in [Spanish](#)

Specifics

- [Hypertensive Crisis](#) (American Heart Association)
- [Isolated Systolic Hypertension: A Health Concern?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- [Secondary Hypertension](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research) Also in [Spanish](#)

Genetics

- [Genetics Home Reference: aldosterone-producing adenoma](#)  (National Library of Medicine)
- [Genetics Home Reference: familial hyperaldosteronism](#)  (National Library of Medicine)
- [Genetics Home Reference: fibronectin glomerulopathy](#)  (National Library of Medicine)
- [Genetics Home Reference: Grange syndrome](#)  (National Library of Medicine)
- [Genetics Home Reference: pseudohypoaldosteronism type 2](#)  (National Library of Medicine)

Health Check Tools

- [Can You Escape the Silent Killer?](#) (American Heart Association)
- [Test Your Blood Pressure IQ](#) (American Heart Association)

Videos and Tutorials

- [Blood pressure](#)  (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Hypertension - overview](#)  (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in [Spanish](#)

Statistics and Research

- [High Blood Pressure Facts](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Hypertension \(High Blood Pressure\)](#)  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute) - [PDF](#)
- [Preventing Stroke Deaths](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Snapshot: Blood Pressure in the U.S.](#) [Infographic](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial \(SPRINT\) Study](#)  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

Clinical Trials

- [ClinicalTrials.gov: Hypertension](#)  (National Institutes of Health)
- [ClinicalTrials.gov: Prehypertension](#)  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- [Article: A multicenter, randomized, and double-blind phase IV clinical trial to...](#)
- [Article: Oriental herbal medicine for insomnia in the elderly with hypertension:...](#)
- [Article: Aldosterone overload: An overlooked cause of high blood pressure?](#)
- [High Blood Pressure -- see more articles](#)

Reference Desk

- [Heart and Stroke Encyclopedia](#) (American Heart Association)

Find an Expert

- [American Heart Association](#)
- [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#) 

Children

- [High Blood Pressure \(Hypertension\) \(For Parents\)](#) (Nemours Foundation)
- [High Blood Pressure Treatment in Children \(Beyond the Basics\)](#) (UpToDate)

Teenagers

- [Hypertension \(High Blood Pressure\)](#) (Nemours Foundation)

Women

- [High Blood Pressure and Women](#) (American Heart Association)
- [Menopause and High Blood Pressure: What's the Connection?](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)Also in Spanish

Seniors

- [High Blood Pressure](#)  (National Institute on Aging)Also in Spanish
- [High Blood Pressure: Unique to Older Adults](#) (AGS Foundation for Health in Aging)

Patient Handouts

- [ACE inhibitors](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in Spanish
- [Blood pressure measurement](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in Spanish
- [Blood pressure monitors for home](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in Spanish
- [Controlling your high blood pressure](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in Spanish
- [Drug-induced hypertension](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in Spanish
- [High blood pressure](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in Spanish
- [High blood pressure - children](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in Spanish

- [High blood pressure and eye disease](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [High blood pressure medications](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Hypertensive heart disease](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Low-salt diet](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Malignant hypertension](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in [Spanish](#)
- [Renovascular hypertension](#) (Medical Encyclopedia)Also in [Spanish](#)