



5 Lifestyle Tips to Lower High Blood Pressure

Adopting a healthy lifestyle is critical to preventing and treating high blood pressure, which significantly reduces your risk for heart disease, kidney disease, and stroke. Not only can diet and exercise lower high blood pressure, but it can also make your blood pressure medications work better.

How much can it help? National blood pressure guidelines issued by the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure offer this chart to help you make healthy lifestyle changes.

The chart shows lifestyle changes can reduce systolic blood pressure (the "top" number in a blood pressure reading). By lowering your systolic blood pressure, your diastolic blood pressure would likely come down as well.

Lifestyle Change	Recommendation	Appx. Systolic B Reduction
Weight loss	Normal BMI of 18.5 - 24.9*	5 - 20 points per lbs. lost ***
Follow DASH eating plan*	Diet high in fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, and low in fat	8 -14 points
Sodium and salt reduction	Limit sodium to 2,400 milligrams per day	2 - 8 points
Exercise	30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week	4 - 9 points
Moderate drinking	Limit alcohol to no more than two drinks per day for men and no more than one drink per day for women****	2 - 4 points

*BMI is body mass index, a measurement of the ratio of height to weight. It can be calculated by dividing your weight (in kilograms) by your height (in meters, squared). It can be calculated by multiplying weight (in pounds) by 705, then dividing by height (in inches) twice.

**The guidelines recommend people with high blood pressure follow the DASH diet -- Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. This eating plan is based on a daily intake of 2,000 calories:

- 7-8 servings per day of grains and grain products (these can include breakfast cereal, whole grain bread, rice, pasta, etc.)
- 4-5 servings of vegetables
- 4-5 servings of fruit
- 2-3 servings of low-fat or nonfat dairy foods
- No more than two servings per day of meat, poultry, and fish
- 4-5 servings of nuts, seeds, and legumes per week
- 2-3 servings of fats and oils (serving example: 1 teaspoon of margarine or oil, 1 tablespoon of salad dressing or mayonnaise)
- 5 servings of sweets per week (only low-fat treats like sugar, jelly, or sorbet)

***Even losing as little as 10 pounds if you're overweight can help reduce or prevent

blood pressure.

***A drink is defined as 12 oz. of beer, 5 oz. of wine, or 1.5 oz of 80-proof liquor.

SOURCES: Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure: "Seventh Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. WebMD Medical Reference in collaboration with The Cleveland Clinic: "Body Mass Index." National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: "The DASH Eating Plan."

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