



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

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Prehypertension

Your blood pressure today is _____ / _____.

Your Blood Pressure.

Please follow up today's blood pressure reading by returning to the Health Center between 8-10am, Monday - Friday for free blood pressure measurements, weekly, for the next month. Make an appointment with a provider if your blood pressure readings continue to be in the prehypertension range.

Blood pressure is measured in two numbers. The top number measures the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. The bottom number measures the pressure in your arteries between beats. Optimal blood pressure is below 120/80. Prehypertension is diagnosed when the top number is between 120-139 and the bottom number is from 80-89.

What is Prehypertension? Blood pressure is the force (in millimeters of mercury) exerted on your artery walls as blood flows through your body. Blood pressure that is persistently slightly elevated is known as prehypertension. Left untreated, prehypertension will likely progress to high blood pressure or hypertension which can increase your risk of heart attack, stroke, and heart failure. You can't see or feel the damage that prehypertension causes to the heart and blood vessels, until it becomes serious, but there are lifestyle changes you can make to reduce your risk of progressing to high blood pressure and to improve your health.

Healthy Lifestyle Changes.

Limit sodium and salt intake. Using a reduced-sodium substitute can lower the daily intake of salt and delay the development of high blood pressure. Since most dietary sodium comes from processed foods, it is also important to limit the amount of processed food in the diet. Avoid fast foods that are high in salt.

Eat Healthier. The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan is a rational approach to healthy eating. It focuses on high intake of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products; and it limits sugary foods and beverages, saturated fats, cholesterol and sodium. Visit the Health Center's nutritionist, available by appointment, for more information about healthy eating. Visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash for DASH diet information.

Get Your Body Moving. All types of aerobic physical activity are beneficial. Even regular vigorous walking has been shown to help lower blood pressure.

Don't Smoke. Smoking cigarettes causes a temporary increase in blood pressure. More importantly, smoking increases the risk heart disease, cancer and stroke.

Keep Weight Under Control. The increase in high blood pressure in recent years is due in large part to Americans' getting heavier. Burning calories through exercise and adopting healthful eating habits will help you lose weight and maintain a good weight. Losing as little as 10 lbs can have a significant effect on blood pressure levels.

Limit Alcohol. Women and men of lower body weight should limit their alcohol to one drink per day, and heavier women and men should have no more than two drinks a day, according to international blood pressure guidelines.

Medication Side-effects. Some prescription and common over-the-counter medications may elevate the blood pressure. These medications include cold remedies, decongestants, and over-the-counter pain relievers. Some prescription drugs that may elevate the blood pressure include birth control pills and Adderall. Various illicit drugs, including cocaine and amphetamines, also can increase blood pressure. You should let your health provider know about any drug and/or medication use.

More information about prehypertension and a healthy lifestyle can be found at:
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/hypertension/index.htm>

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