

Title: Preventing High Blood Pressure in African American Populations

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Abstract: Hypertension (or high blood pressure) is a problem for many Americans with higher prevalence among African Americans. There are simple steps before advising the use of medications to take to ensure this problem does not lead to long-term systemic effects such as stroke, heart failure, and/or kidney disease.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

# Checking your Blood

## Pressure

### How can I read it?

**Answer: Doctors office or at automated readers (Some pharmacies and some grocery stores)**

Testing your blood pressure is fast and painless. It is done with a machine called a sphygmomanometer (pronounced sfig'-mo-ma-nom-e-ter). You can have it tested at the doctor's office. Electronic blood pressure monitors can also be purchased at drug stores for taking your blood pressure at home. Some grocery stores and pharmacies offer free automated blood pressure readings.

Do not smoke, drink caffeine, or exercise 30 minutes prior to taking blood pressure. Keep your feet uncrossed during measurement and allow yourself rest before taking the measurement (if you walked to the grocery store for your reading for example).



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### DASH Diet

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/introduction.html>

### National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/index.html>

### American Academy of Family Physicians

<http://www.familydoctor.org>

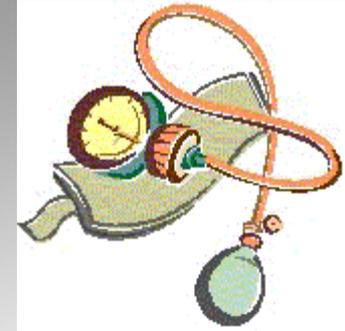
### American Heart Association

<http://www.americanheart.org>

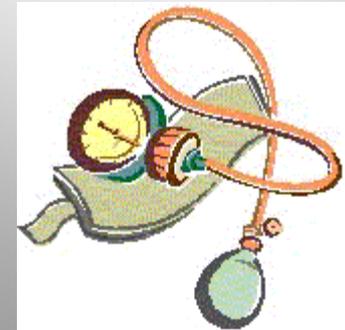
### Medline Plus

<http://medlineplus.gov/>

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# How Can I Prevent High Blood Pressure?



# What is High Blood Pressure and why do I care

High blood pressure is a common problem in adults, with more cases among African Americans. One third of the population has hypertension in the US.

Since often hypertension does not cause you any noticeable harm, it has been dubbed "the silent killer." It has the potential to affect almost all the organs in your body. Understanding hypertension is the first step to making sure that this problem never affects you.

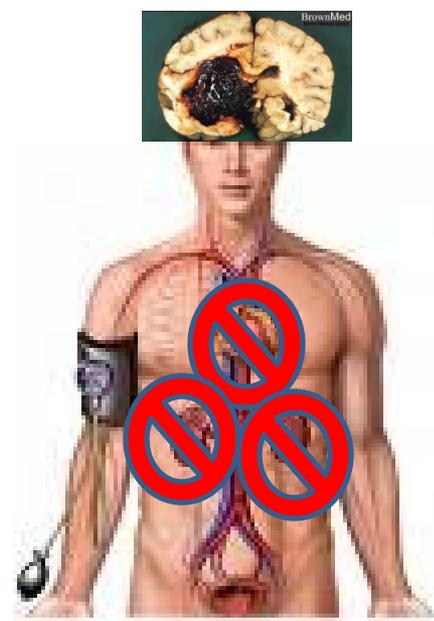
## What Blood Pressures are considered Hypertension?

Normal blood pressure is a top number (systolic) less than 140 and a bottom number (diastolic) less than 90. You have hypertension if your top number (systolic) is more than 140 or your bottom number (diastolic) is more than 90. Readings from 2 or more visits to the doctor's office are needed to diagnose hypertension. See Table compliments of Singapore Cancer Socety on next page.

Category	Systolic BP (mmHg)	Diastolic BP (mmHg)
Normal	< 130	< 80
High-normal BP	130 - 139	80 - 89
Grade 1 Hypertension	140 - 159*	90 - 99
Grade 2 Hypertension	≥160*	≥100
Isolated Systolic Hypertension	≥140	< 90

## Still, why do I care?

Hypertension destroys the brain, heart, and kidneys.



## What can I do?

Namely, take care of yourself with proper diet and exercise.

### Nutrition: Low salt

Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and read nutrition labels for the amount of sodium in your diet. The DASH diet is shown to reduce blood pressures and prevent hypertension.

### Exercise

exercise for 30 minutes, 3-5 times per week can help reduce blood pressure. Exercise also contributes to losing weight which is good for you as well.

**Talk to your Doctor if you have more questions**