

BLACK HISTORY MONTH and the American Experience



African American Health Coalition, Inc.



PROTECT YOUR HEART! Prevent High Blood Pressure

Anyone can develop high blood pressure, also called hypertension. African-Americans are at higher risk for this serious disease than any other race or ethnic group. High blood pressure tends to be more common, happens at an earlier age, and is more severe for many African Americans. The good news is that high blood pressure can be controlled and better yet, it can be prevented!

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against your blood vessels. Your blood pressure is at its greatest when your heart contracts and is pumping blood. This is systolic blood pressure. When your heart rests between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is called diastolic blood pressure. Blood pressure is always given as these two numbers: the systolic and diastolic pressures. The numbers are usually written one above or before the other, with systolic first, for example, 120/80.



Prevent high blood pressure.

If your blood pressure is not high now, take steps to prevent it from becoming high. Here's how:

Aim for a healthy weight.

- Choose foods lower in fat and calories.
- Eat smaller portions.
- Try not to gain extra weight. Lose weight if you are overweight. Try losing weight slowly, about 1/2 to 1 pound each week until you reach a healthy weight.
- Be physically active every day.



Know your number.

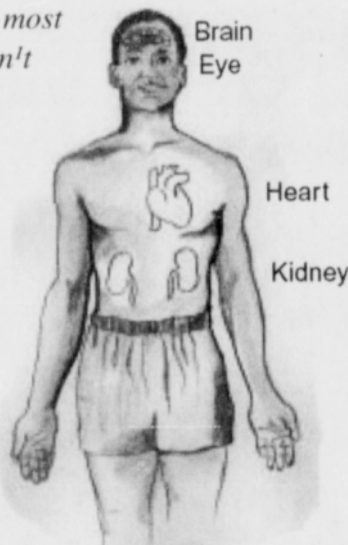
- Have your blood pressure checked. It is easy, quick, and painless.
- Your blood pressure should be checked by your health care provider at least once each year.
- If you have high blood pressure, it should be checked more often. You can have your blood pressure checked at your doctor's office, your neighborhood clinic, health fairs at your church, or some shopping malls.



Is high blood pressure really a big deal?

YES! When your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder than it should to pump blood to all parts of the body. High blood pressure is called the "silent killer" because most people feel healthy and don't even know that they have it. If it is not treated, high blood pressure can cause:

- stroke
- heart attack
- kidney problems
- eye problems
- death



Eat less salt and sodium.

- Read the food label. Choose foods with less salt and sodium.
- Prepare lower sodium meals from scratch instead of using convenience foods that are high in sodium.
- Use spices, herbs, and salt free seasoning blends instead of salt.
- Use only small amounts of cured or smoked meats for flavor.
- Use less salt when cooking.

Poultry, Fish, Meat:
What else can you do? Add spice to your life. Poultry: ginger, rosemary, thyme, curry powder, dill, sage, turmeric, oregano, cloves, orange rind.

Fish: Curry powder, pepper, lemon juice, ginger, marjoram, onion, paprika

Pork: Garlic, onion, sage, ginger, curry, cloves, bay leaf, oregano

Vegetables:
Greens: Thyme, ginger, onion, dill, garlic
Potatoes: Garlic, pepper, paprika, thyme, onion, sage
Beans: Thyme, onion, dill, cumin, oregano, garlic, tarragon, rosemary
Okra: Garlic, pepper, thyme, onion

Check below to see where you fit in.

| Blood pressure categories (adults age 18 and over) | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Category | Systolic (mm/Hg) | Diastolic (mm/Hg) |
| Normal | 130 or less | 85 or less |
| High normal | 130-139 | 85-89 |
| High blood pressure | 140 or more | 90 or more |

Strive for an optimal blood pressure of 120/80 or less.

Lower your high blood pressure.

If you have high blood pressure, you may be able to lower or keep your high blood pressure down. Practice these steps.



- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be more active every day.
- Eat fewer foods high in salt and sodium.
- Cut back on alcoholic beverages.

You may also need medicine to lower your high blood pressure. Tell your doctor about any medicine you are already taking.

Follow these tips if you take medicine:

- Take your medicine the way your doctor tells you. To help you remember, plan to take your medicine at the same time every day.
- Tell the doctor right away if the medicine makes you feel strange or sick. The doctor may make changes in your medicine.
- Make sure you don't miss any days. Refill your prescription before you use up your medicine.
- Have your blood pressure checked often to be sure your medicine is working the way you and your doctor planned.
- Don't stop taking your medicine if your blood pressure is okay—that means the medicine is working.

Empower yourself!

Keep a record of your blood pressure.

| | | | | | | |
|---------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Date | | | | | | |
| Reading | | | | | | |
| Goal | | | | | | |

Check what you will do to prevent or lower your high blood pressure. Try to do them all.

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be more active every day.
- Eat fewer foods high in salt and sodium.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Cut back on the number of alcoholic beverages, if you drink.
- Have blood pressure checked.
- Take medicine the way the doctor says.

Eat more fruits and vegetables.

- Eat more fruits and vegetables in meals and as snacks.
- Add more vegetables to stews and casseroles.
- Serve fruit as a dessert more often.



Be active every day.

- Walk a little further each day or walk to the bus stop.
- Dance, skip, jump, run... take every opportunity to move your body.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.



Cut back on alcoholic beverages.

Alcohol raises blood pressure. Alcohol also adds calories and may make it harder to lose weight. Men who drink should have no more than two drinks a day. Women who drink should have no more than one drink a day. Pregnant women should not drink any alcohol.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Service
National Institutes of Health
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
NIH Publication No. 97-4064
September 1997



For more information contact AAHC at 503-413-1850 or visit the AAHC website at www.aahc-portland.org