



How to lower your blood pressure

It might be hard to believe, but there is good news about high blood pressure. This is one health issue you can prevent, or treat as long as you know you have it.

High blood pressure has no warning signs or symptoms. So, it's important to get your blood pressure checked by your doctor on a regular basis. Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80. Anything over that is a concern and 140/90, or higher, is considered high blood pressure.

If your blood pressure is in the normal range, great job! Keep doing what you're doing and have your blood pressure checked at each medical visit, or as often as your doctor suggests.

If your doctor says you have prehypertension or hypertension, you can often control or lower your blood pressure through your lifestyle. However, there are a couple of risk factors you can't control, so let's get those out of the way first. Your risk of getting high blood pressure is greater if your parents or other close blood relatives have it. And, everyone's blood vessels become less flexible with age, so your risk goes up as you get older, especially after the age of 55.

1 out of 3 people in the U.S. have high blood pressure (also called hypertension) and many of them don't know it.

Now for the risk factors you can control:

Stop smoking.

Smoking injures blood vessels, which is especially bad if you have high blood pressure. Quitting lowers your risk for heart disease and stroke.

Eat or drink less salt (sodium).

Sodium causes your body to hold onto fluid. This makes your blood vessels get smaller and raises blood pressure. If your blood pressure is normal, have no more than 2,400 milligrams of sodium a day. That's about a teaspoon of salt. If your blood pressure is high, your doctor may suggest no more than 1,500 milligrams a day.

Follow a healthy eating plan.

Check out the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's DASH diet. DASH stands for "Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension." Studies show that this low-salt, low-fat diet filled with fruits, vegetables and whole grains effectively controls blood pressure.

Maintain a healthy weight.

As your weight goes up, so does your risk for high blood pressure. Studies show that losing just 10 pounds can make a difference.

Be active.

The Surgeon General recommends 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week. Remember that daily tasks such as vigorous cleaning or gardening also count.

Limit alcohol.

Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure.



If you want to learn more about high blood pressure, speak with your doctor.

Additional information is also available at [anthem.com](https://www.anthem.com).

(Please register if you haven't yet.)

Sources:
National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute website: *Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure* (accessed January 2013): nhlbi.nih.gov.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: *High Blood Pressure Prevention: What You Can Do* (accessed January 2013): cdc.gov.
American Heart Association website: *Understanding Your Risk for High Blood Pressure* (accessed January 2013): heart.org.

This information is meant to be educational. It should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please talk to your doctor about changes that may affect your health.

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is the trade name of: In Colorado: Rocky Mountain Hospital and Medical Service, Inc. HMO products underwritten by HMO Colorado, Inc. In Connecticut: Anthem Health Plans, Inc. In Indiana: Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. In Kentucky: Anthem Health Plans of Kentucky, Inc. In Maine: Anthem Health Plans of Maine, Inc. In Missouri (excluding 30 counties in the Kansas City area): RightCHOICE® Managed Care, Inc. (RIT), Healthy Alliance® Life Insurance Company (HALIC), and HMO Missouri, Inc. RIT and certain affiliates administer non-HMO benefits underwritten by HALIC and HMO benefits underwritten by HMO Missouri, Inc. RIT and certain affiliates only provide administrative services for self-funded plans and do not underwrite benefits. In Nevada: Rocky Mountain Hospital and Medical Service, Inc. HMO products underwritten by HMO Colorado, Inc. dba HMO Nevada. In New Hampshire: Anthem Health Plans of New Hampshire, Inc. In Ohio: Community Insurance Company. In Virginia: Anthem Health Plans of Virginia, Inc. trades as Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Virginia, and its service area is all of Virginia except for the City of Fairfax, the Town of Vienna, and the area east of State Route 123. In Wisconsin: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Wisconsin (BCBSWI), which underwrites or administers the PPO and indemnity policies; CompCare Health Services Insurance Corporation (CompCare), which underwrites or administers the HMO policies; and CompCare and BCBSWI collectively, which underwrite or administer the POS policies. Independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. © ANTHEM is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield names and symbols are registered marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.