



Patient & Family Guide

2022

High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

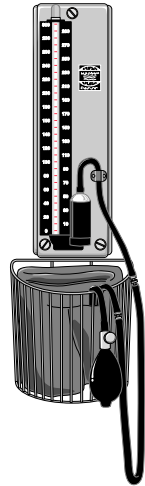


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High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

What is blood pressure?

- Your heart pumps blood around your body through blood vessels called arteries. Blood pressure is the force of blood on the walls of your arteries as it moves.
- Blood pressure is measured by placing a cuff around your upper arm and inflating (making it bigger by adding air to it) it. A stethoscope is placed over the artery below the cuff so that we can hear your pulse.
- A blood pressure measurement is written as 2 numbers. For example, 120/80 (read as “120 over 80”).
 - › The upper number (systolic blood pressure) is the force on the artery walls when your heart pumps.
 - › The lower number (diastolic blood pressure) is the force on the artery walls when your heart rests between beats.



What is high blood pressure?

- High blood pressure is when you have a measurement of 140/90 or higher for 3 months in a row. The medical name for high blood pressure is hypertension.
- Some medical problems can cause high blood pressure. Your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) will examine you and may order tests to check for these problems.
- If a medical problem is causing your high blood pressure, correcting the problem may also correct your high blood pressure.
- If you do not have a medical problem that is causing your high blood pressure, then you have essential hypertension.

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

What causes hypertension?

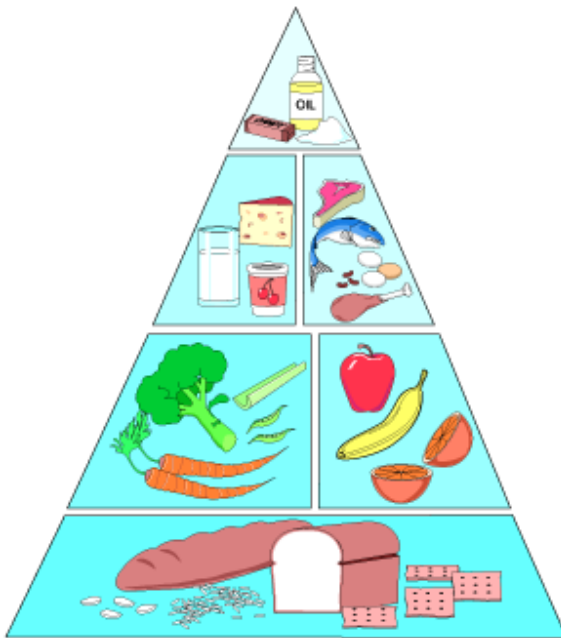
- No one knows what causes essential hypertension. The risk of having high blood pressure is higher if you:
 - › Have family members who have it
 - › Are overweight
 - › Have diabetes
 - › Drink too much alcohol
 - › Eat too much salt
 - › Do not exercise
- There are usually no symptoms of high blood pressure. That is why it is important to have yearly check-ups with your primary health care provider.

If high blood pressure is not treated, it can damage your arteries and lead to strokes, heart disease, or kidney problems.

Treatment

Eat healthy

- Drinking too much coffee, tea, or cola can raise your blood pressure. Losing weight and cutting back on salt can help to control your blood pressure.
- It is important to follow a low-fat diet. This will help you to keep a healthy weight and healthy cholesterol levels. Increased cholesterol levels can affect how blood vessels contract and release, which can affect the pressure needed to pump blood through them.



Eating a balanced diet can help to control your blood pressure.

Exercise regularly

- Regular exercise can help to control your weight and your blood pressure. It can also help to relieve stress.
- For many people, the best exercise is walking. Your primary health care provider or physiotherapist can help you choose the exercise that is best for you.

Drink alcohol in moderation

- Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink will help to control your blood pressure.
- As a general rule, each day you should not drink more than:
 - › Two 12-ounce beers**OR**
 - › Two ounces of hard liquor**OR**
 - › Two 4-ounce glasses of wine
- Talk with your primary health care provider about drinking in moderation.

Take your medication

- You may be given medication to treat your high blood pressure. There are many types of medications available. You may need to take more than one type.

- Your primary health care provider or pharmacist can give you information about each medication that you are taking.
- You must take your medication(s) **every day**, as ordered by your primary health care provider. If you stop taking your medication(s), your blood pressure will rise again.
- Sometimes medication does not work as well as it should or causes side effects. **It is very important to call your primary health care provider right away if you have any problems with a medication.**

Lower stress

- Everyone has some stress in their life. **This is normal.** But stress can raise your blood pressure.
- Learn healthy coping skills to help you manage stress and prevent health problems. Healthy coping skills include taking time for yourself with activities you enjoy. For example, yoga, meditation, or getting a massage. Getting enough sleep, eating healthy, and good time management skills can also relieve stress.

Stop smoking

- Smoking can cause problems with your heart and arteries. If you smoke and take medication(s) for high blood pressure, your medication(s) may not work as well as it should. **It is very important to stop smoking.**
- Ask your primary health care provider for information to help you stop smoking, or visit:
 - › <https://mha.nshealth.ca/en/services/stop-smoking-program>
 - › <https://tobaccofree.novascotia.ca/>



See your primary health care provider regularly

Keep your appointments with your primary health care provider. Tell them right away if you have any problems or concerns.

High blood pressure is a chronic (ongoing) disease.

There is no cure, but it can be controlled. Controlling your blood pressure can help you to live a longer and healthier life.

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

Nova Scotia Health promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.

Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.