

Heart Health

Blood Pressure Basics

1. Blood pressure is the measure of the pressure of force of blood against the walls of the arteries. Top number is called **SYSTOLIC** [pressure when the heart contracts and pushes blood out]. The bottom number is called **DIASTOLIC** [lowest pressure when the heart relaxes between beats].
2. There aren't always obvious symptoms of high blood pressure. Some may include dizziness, headaches, lethargy.
3. High blood pressure greatly increases your risk of coronary heart disease, congestive heart failure, and stroke.
4. An ideal blood pressure is **120/80 or lower**.
5. A blood pressure that is consistently **140/90 or higher** is considered high.
6. Blood Pressure between 120/80 and 140/90 is called prehypertension – an indication of increased cardiovascular risk.
7. **Medications** may be necessary to help control blood pressure and should be taken if prescribed by the doctor.

10 Steps To Reduce Your Blood Pressure

1. **Reduce Sodium** – Aim for 200mg per serving or less than 2000mg [healthy range <1500 mg] daily.
2. **Increase Exercise** – Try for 30 minutes of light-moderate activity most days a week.
3. **Get Enough Sleep** – Chronic lack of sleep can contribute to high blood pressure.
4. **Reduce Stress** – Make time for yourself and engage in activities that bring you joy.
5. **Sufficient Potassium** – 4000mg per day by eating lots of fruits & vegetables.
6. **Meditation** – Practicing meditation regularly can be very effective in lowering BP.
7. **Moderate Alcohol Consumption**
8. **No Smoking** – Smoking leads to significant spikes in systolic blood pressure.
9. **Vasodilating Foods** – Known to help open arteries, allowing blood to flow more freely.
10. **Weight Control** – Even a moderate amount can lead to significant changes in your blood pressure.

Cholesterol Facts

High cholesterol: Can eventually make it difficult for enough blood to flow through your arteries. This increases the risk of a heart attack and stroke.

Fact: Including cholesterol on the nutritional information panel is rather insignificant because this only represents dietary cholesterol which does not directly affect people's cholesterol levels. It's a person's fat molecule [building blocks for cholesterol] that is the most important to consider; a healthy weight should be the goal by lowering saturated and trans fats!

Symptoms: High cholesterol has no symptoms. A blood test is the only way to detect it.

Risk Factors: Factors within your control: inactivity, obesity and an unhealthy diet. Factors beyond your control: genetic makeup. Note: Waist circumference is also a good indicator of risk [Men should be <40 inches; Women should be < 35 inches].

10 Steps To Reduce Your Cholesterol Levels!

1. **Reduce** your intake of saturated fats to 7% or less of all calories consumed.
2. **Reduce** dietary cholesterol by reducing saturated fat – eat smaller portions of meat with the fat trimmed, limit egg consumption, cook your food more often by baking, broiling, steaming and boiling.
3. **Reduce** total fat in your diet.
4. **Increase** dietary fiber – fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains.
5. **Eat more** vegetable proteins and less animal proteins – nuts, brown rice beans and legumes.
6. **Manage** your weight.
7. **Increase** antioxidants in your diet to help prevent cholesterol buildup in your arteries.
8. **Increase** your physical activity – it increases HDL, burns fat, and helps control weight.
9. **Consult** a physician about medication if necessary.
10. Up Your **Omega 3's**. These good fats are recommended for lowering LDL levels and may be found in different types of fish and plant-based sources.

Recommended Levels:

HDL: Men >1.2 mmol/L and Women 1.0 mmol/L

*HDL is determined mainly by your genetics but improves if you are at a healthy weight, non-smoker, non-drinker, regular exerciser.

LDL: <3.5 mmol/L - mainly from saturated fats in diet (meat, >2% milk, >20% cheese etc.)

TG: <1.7 mmol/L - mainly from excess simple sugars in diet (fruit, juice, pop, alcohol, candy, etc.)

Total cholesterol: < 5.2 mmol/L

Total Chol/HDL ratio: <5

The DASH Diet

The DASH diet resulted from the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension clinical study. The DASH combination diet has been proven to lower blood pressure and can help prevent and control high blood pressure.

The DASH diet helps keep your blood pressure in check because it is rich in fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy foods, and low in saturated and total fat. It is also low in cholesterol and high in dietary fibre, potassium, calcium, and magnesium. Check out the chart below for servings and examples of ways you can eat the DASH way.

Food Group Servings	Serving Sizes	Healthy Examples	Benefit
Vegetables and Fruit 8-10 per day	1 slice of bread, ½ cup dry cereal, ½ cooked rice	Whole-wheat bread, pita or bagel, oatmeal, pasta	Major sources of energy and fibre
Grain Products 7-8 per day	1 cup raw leafy vegetable, 1 med fruit or vegetable	Tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, bananas, strawberries, dates, broccoli, spinach, beans, peas, oranges	Rich sources of potassium, magnesium, and fibre
Milk and Alternatives 2-3 per day	1 cup of milk, 50g of cheese, ¾ cup of yogurt	Skim or 1% milk, nonfat or low-fat yogurt, part-skim mozzarella cheese	Major source of calcium and protein
Meat and Alternatives 2-3 per day	3 oz cooked meats, poultry, fish	Select only lean cuts and trim away visible fats; broil, roast or boil meats	Rich sources of protein, iron and magnesium
Nuts, seeds, and legumes 4-5 Per Week	1/3 cup of nuts, 2 tbsp seeds, ½ cup cooked legumes	Almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, kidney beans, lentils	Rich sources of magnesium, potassium, protein, fibre, omega 3 fat

Tips on eating the DASH way

- Start small and make gradual changes in your eating habits.
- Center your meal around healthy carbohydrates such as whole grain pasta, brown rice, beans, and vegetables.
- Treat meat as one part of the whole meal, instead of the main focus.
- Use fruit for desserts and snacks.

Remember to include foods low in salt and sodium, maintain a healthy weight, be physically active, and if you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Source: National Heart, Lung, Blood Institute; Heart and Stroke Foundation

Top Foods for Heart Health

	Blood Pressure	Cholesterol	Diabetes	Heart Disease
1	Avocado	Apples	Beans	Lean Chicken
2	Beans	Beans	Cereal [low sugar]	Lean Turkey
3	Bananas	Brown Rice	Chicken	Orange Juice
4	Dark Chocolate	Cinnamon	Cinnamon	Pomegranate
5	Fish	Garlic	Fruit	Red wine
6	Flax	Grapes	Fish	Salmon
7	Potatoes	Oats	Nuts	Skim milk
8	Skim Milk	Salmon	Olive Oil	Tuna
9	Spinach	Walnuts	Vegetables	Vegetables
10	Sunflower seeds	Whole grains	Yogurt	Water

***What is ONE thing you're going to start doing TODAY
to ensure a healthy heart?***