

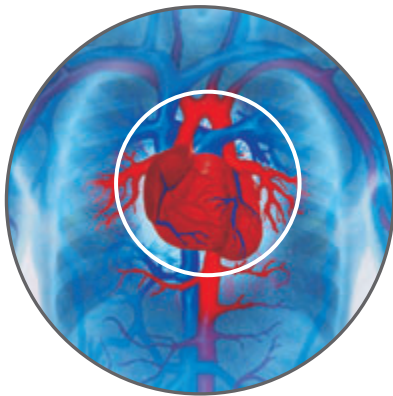


Understanding your blood pressure numbers

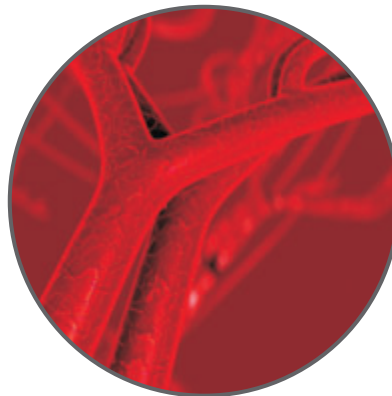
What you need to know to fight heart disease and stroke

What Is Blood Pressure?

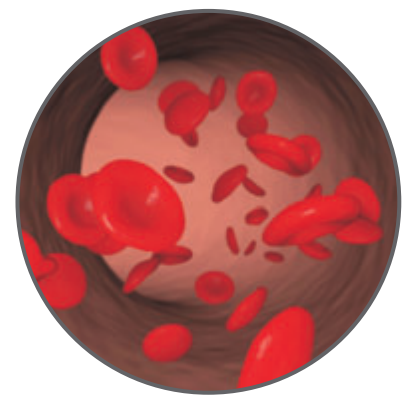
Blood pressure **measures the force it takes your heart to pump blood throughout your body.** When your blood flows through your arteries at a higher pressure than normal, you have high blood pressure (also known as *hypertension*).



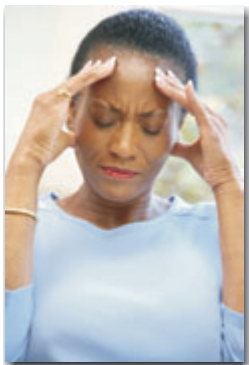
Heart



Arteries
in the heart



Blood flowing
through arteries

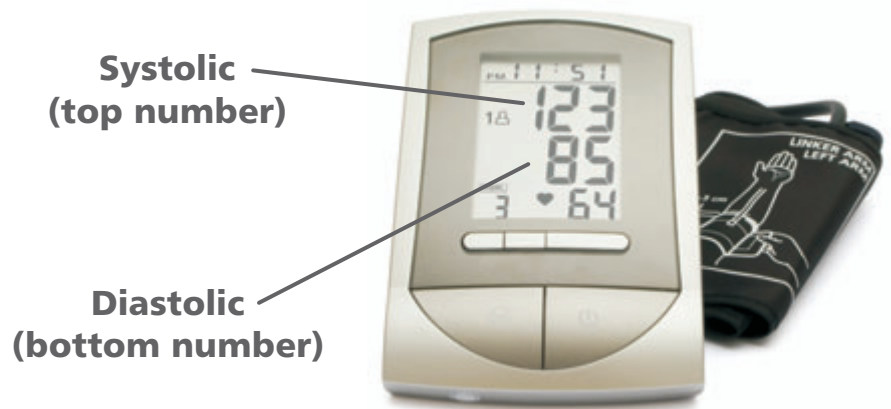


What are the signs of high blood pressure?

Usually, there are none. That is why it is called “**the silent killer.**” People with high blood pressure may have headaches or feel dizzy and tired. Things may look blurry. Or they may feel fine. That is why it is so important to **know your blood pressure numbers.**

How Is Blood Pressure Checked?

When your doctor measures your blood pressure, he or she will record two numbers—a **TOP** number, called *systolic pressure*, and a **BOTTOM** number, called *diastolic pressure*. *Systolic pressure* is the force it takes your heart to beat. *Diastolic pressure* is your heart at rest.



Why are my blood pressure numbers important for me to know?

High blood pressure can mean you're at risk for heart disease and stroke. Heart disease can lead to heart attacks. A stroke is a “brain attack” and can happen when blood flow to the brain stops. When high blood pressure is left untreated, it can be deadly.

Risk Factors You Cannot Control

Family history—If your close blood relatives have high blood pressure, you're more likely to get it.

Age—Anyone could have high blood pressure, but it's more common the older you get.

Race—African Americans are at higher risk than people of other races.

Take Control for Good Health

What can I do to reduce my risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke?

The good news is that there is a lot you can do to lower your risk of developing high blood pressure, heart disease, or having a stroke:



- Avoiding high salt meals, packaged meats, canned foods, and the salt shaker.



- Controlling your blood sugar if you have diabetes.



- Controlling your cholesterol, a type of fat found in your blood. Get it checked by your doctor.



- Exercising, walking, dancing, or jogging 30-60 minutes a day.



- Eating more fruits, vegetables, lean cuts of meat, and whole grain cereals. Avoid fatty foods.



- Stopping smoking.



- Not drinking more than 1 or 2 alcoholic drinks per day.



- Taking your medicine, and checking your blood pressure regularly.



- Lessening stress by listening to music, laughing, and meditating.

Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80. This is read as “less than 120 over 80.” Talk with your doctor if the top number is more than 120 or your bottom number is more than 80. This is the beginning of high blood pressure.

**Systolic
(top number)**

**Diastolic
(bottom number)**



If you have high blood pressure, set a goal for what it should be with your doctor.

- My blood pressure today is _____ over _____.
- My top number should be _____ or less.
- My bottom number should be _____ or less.



It's clear. **You need to know your blood pressure numbers.**

Get checked regularly by your doctor, and pay attention.

Ask about free blood pressure checks at your local pharmacy or health department.

Don't hesitate to ask your doctor about your numbers.

Talk to your family and friends to help support your healthy lifestyle.

For more information, visit www.startwithyourheart.com.

**Start WITH
YOUR Heart**
*Justus-Warren Heart Disease &
Stroke Prevention Task Force*