

Know your numbers: What do the new blood pressure guidelines mean?

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Maintaining healthy blood pressure is essential to avoiding stroke and other debilitating illnesses as you age. High blood pressure damages blood vessels, and is one of the leading killers worldwide. The American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology recently enacted new blood pressure guidelines. Continue reading to view the new guidelines, and learn how to maintain healthy blood pressure.

Know your numbers: Understanding your blood pressure is key to managing it. Because people with high blood pressure don't have symptoms, it is important to have your blood pressure checked regularly.

Under the new system, the level for elevated and high blood pressure is lower than before. Here are the new guidelines; having either the top number (systolic) or the bottom number (diastolic) in a category puts you in that category.

- Healthy: Below 120/80
- Elevated: 120/80 to 129/80
- High (Stage one hypertension) 130/80 to 139/89
- Very high (Stage two hypertension) 140/90 or above
- Crisis (immediate hospitalization/treatment needed) 140/90 or above

Change your numbers: Fortunately blood pressure can be modified. And you may not need to rush to get a prescription for blood pressure lowering medications. The guidelines recommend most people with elevated or high blood pressure should try lifestyle changes before turning to drugs. Things that work include: increasing physical activity, eating less salt, and eating more fruit vegetables and whole grains. According to the Harvard health blog, just changing your eating habits can bring down systolic blood pressure by as much as 11 points. Each additional healthy habit you adopt can bring it down another four to five points. For more information go to:

[American Heart Association](#)

[DASH Diet](#)

[Harvard Health](#)