

HEALTHY HABITS FOR TREATING HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



Treating high blood pressure usually involves a combination of healthy habits and medications. Both work best together. Luckily, all the healthy habits that lower your blood pressure also promote the health of your kidneys and heart.

1 Cut back on sodium (salt)

Aim for less than 2,300 mg a day, moving toward less than 1,500 mg if you can. This is about 1 teaspoon of salt from all the food and drinks you consume each day. This means limiting foods with high sodium levels listed on their nutrition facts labels. Some foods that don't taste salty can have a surprising amount of sodium when you check their nutrition facts label. Most salt comes from packaged and restaurant food—read labels, cook at home, and order “no added salt.”

2 Eat a heart-healthy and kidney-friendly diet

One example is the DASH diet: plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts, and low-fat dairy. It is also low in sodium (salt), added sugars, saturated fat, and red meats. People with kidney disease should check with their care team before using potassium-based salt substitutes, because your kidneys may not handle extra potassium safely. Work with a dietitian to build a plan that works for you!

3 Reach a healthy weight

If your healthcare team recommends weight loss, even a modest amount can improve your health in many ways. Losing about 5% of your body weight can meaningfully lower blood pressure. Healthy eating, regular physical activity, and medications (when appropriate) can all be helpful tools to support your goals.

4 Be active

Aim for about 150 minutes a week of activity such as brisk walking. Break it up throughout the week and try not to go 2 or more days in a row without activity. Adding some strength exercises at least 2 days per week is also very helpful. It's okay to start slowly—taking short walks is a great way to begin.



5 Limit alcohol

Limit alcohol to no more than 1 drink a day for women, or 2 drinks a day for men. Less is even better! Keep in mind that a “drink” means 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor.

6 Don't smoke or use tobacco

If you smoke or use tobacco products, stop. Smoking hardens your heart and blood vessels, making it harder for blood to travel throughout your body. It can also speed up the kidney disease process and increase your risk of kidney failure and other serious health problems like heart disease, cancer, and stroke.

7 Manage stress

It is impossible to get rid of stress completely. However, there are steps you can take to manage stress and help control your body's response to stress. Some simple ways to reduce stress include slow breathing, meditation, yoga, prayer, regular physical activity, and making time for activities you enjoy.



← To learn more, scan the QR or visit [kidney.org/HighBP](https://www.kidney.org/HighBP)

8 Keep a regular sleep schedule

Going to bed and waking up at similar times may support better sleep and blood pressure control. Aim for 7–9 hours of good-quality sleep each night.

9 Avoid or limit NSAIDs when possible

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can raise blood pressure and may also harm the kidneys. Examples include ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) and naproxen (Aleve). Ask your healthcare team about safer options for pain relief.

Developed in
collaboration with



The Mended Hearts, Inc.

For more information, contact the National Kidney Foundation

Toll-free help line: **855.NKF.CARES** or email: nkfcare@kidney.org