

High Blood Pressure

Do you have a plan for prevention and control?

Having high blood pressure lasts a lifetime, but there is good news. Sometimes high blood pressure can be treated, controlled and even prevented by changing habits and making healthy choices. If you take medicine to lower your blood pressure, these changes can help the medicine work better.

- **Keep at a healthy weight.** If you are overweight, losing as little as 10 pounds of excess weight can make a difference in your blood pressure. A healthy weight has other health benefits as well. For help to lose weight, talk to your health care team about *MOVE!* Weight Management Program for Veterans. You can also visit www.move.va.gov for more information.
- **Eat healthy food.** Eating fruits, vegetables and foods that contain fiber has many health benefits. Fresh and frozen are best as they usually contain less salt and sodium. Limit foods that contain saturated fats and cholesterol, such as red meats and cheeses. Choose low-fat dairy products. Try different ways of preparing and seasoning foods that don't use salt, butter or cheeses.
- **Get active.** Getting physically active helps with losing weight and keeping it off. Another bonus of physical activity is that it generally makes you feel better. Set a goal for 30 minutes of activity for most days of the week. Consider parking your car further away from the building, taking the stairs and taking walks. If the weather is too hot or too cold, go to the mall and walk there.



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- **Watch what you drink.** Drinks that contain alcohol or caffeine, like coffee and cola, can cause blood pressure to rise. If you drink alcohol, limit the amount to 2 drinks per day if you are a man and 1 if you are a woman. Also, alcohol contains calories which can cause you to gain weight.
- **Stop smoking.** If you smoke, find a way to stop. Ask your health care team for help.
- **Manage your stress.** Avoiding stress is not always an option. Develop healthy ways to handle stress: take a walk, listen to music, count to 10, and take some deep breaths. Physical activity also helps with managing stress.
- **Take your medicine.** It is important to take your medicines as directed. If you having problems with your medicines, tell your health care team.
- **Keep your appointments for your blood pressure checks.** The only way to know if your blood pressure is under control is to check it.

