



What is the link between high blood pressure and PAD?

High blood pressure increases your risk of having a heart attack, stroke, eye problems and kidney disease. People who have high blood pressure also have a higher risk of having Peripheral Artery Disease or PAD. Over time, high blood pressure can harm the walls of blood vessels. The walls become rougher and thicker and there is a greater buildup of plaque. This causes the arteries to harden and narrow, making it harder for blood to flow through the blood vessels.

Treating high blood pressure is a very important part of treating PAD. You can prevent or delay a heart attack, stroke and other health problems by having your blood pressure checked at every health care visit (or at least two to four times a year) and by taking action to reach your blood pressure goal.

What is high blood pressure?

It is normal for your blood pressure to rise and fall during the day. For example, it may be higher when you exercise and lower when you sleep. When it stays high over time, it means your blood moves through your vessels with too much force, and you have high blood pressure.

Blood pressure is a measure of the force of blood flow against the inside of the artery walls. It is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). When your health care team checks your blood pressure, they record two numbers—for example, 130 over 80 (or 130/80 mmHg). Both numbers are important.



- The first number is the pressure as your heart beats and pushes blood through the blood vessels. This is called the systolic (sis-tol-ic) pressure. Systolic pressure below 120 is normal; a reading of 140 or higher means you have high blood pressure.
- The second number is the pressure when the heart relaxes between beats. This is called the diastolic (dy-as-tol-ic) pressure. Diastolic pressure below 80 is normal; 90 or higher means you have high blood pressure.

High blood pressure is dangerous because it makes the heart work too hard and the force of its blood flow can harm arteries. Known as the “silent killer,” high blood pressure often has no warning signs or symptoms. Once it occurs, it tends to last a lifetime.

The good news is that high blood pressure can be controlled. Many research studies show that high blood pressure can be treated and that treatment can save your life. It can reduce your chances of having a heart attack, a stroke or heart failure. For people with PAD who have diabetes, controlling your high blood pressure also can help lower your chances of having eye and kidney disease.

What should my blood pressure goal be?

Work with your health care team to reach a blood pressure goal of less than 140 over 90 (140/90 mmHg). If you have PAD and diabetes, you have a higher risk of heart, eye and kidney disease. That is why your goal should be a little lower—less than 130 over 80 (130/80 mmHg).

What can I do to control my high blood pressure and reach my goal?

Thanks to years of research about high blood pressure, we know what lifestyle changes and medicines work to control the disease. The National Institutes of Health recommend these steps to control your blood pressure—and improve your health overall.

✓ Lose weight, if you weigh too much, and stay at a healthy weight.

Move more and eat less. Limit portion sizes. Cut down on high calorie and high fat foods. Be as active as you can throughout the day. To lose weight, eat only as many calories as you will burn.

✓ Make wise food choices to keep your heart healthy.

The cholesterol in the foods you eat raises the cholesterol level in your blood — but not as much as saturated fat. Both often are found in the same foods. These include foods such as egg yolks, high-fat meat and poultry, liver and other organ meats, and high-fat dairy products such as whole milk. By cutting down on your intake of foods high in saturated fat, you also will help reduce your intake of cholesterol.

✓ **Quit smoking.** Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do to control high blood pressure and PAD. At the same time, you will lower your chances of a heart attack, stroke, cancer and other health problems. Ask your health care team about how they can help you quit.

✓ Reduce your salt and sodium intake.

Read food labels to choose canned, processed and fast foods that are lower in sodium. Limit sodium intake to no more than 2,400 mg—about 1 teaspoon of salt—each day. Avoid snacks and fast foods that are high in salt and sodium.



✓ Get more physical activity.

Ask your health care team for help on starting a new routine. Work up to at least 30 minutes of brisk walking on a treadmill or go for walks outside 3 to 5 days a week.

If you are just starting out, begin with 5 minutes a day and add 5 minutes more each week.

✓ Be careful with alcohol.

If you drink beer, wine or alcohol, limit your intake. For men, that means no more than 2 servings a day; for women, that means no more than **1 serving**.

✓ Take medicines as prescribed.

There are many types of medicines to control high blood pressure. Your health care team will prescribe the right medicine, or maybe even more than one, that works for you. If you need medicine for your high blood pressure, make sure you understand what it is for and how and when to take it. Be sure to take the medicine as prescribed and if you have side effects, talk to your health care team about other options.

✓ Work with your health care team.

At each visit, ask what your blood pressure numbers are, what they mean and what you need to do to reach your blood pressure goal. Talk about any problems you are having taking care of your blood pressure and ask for help.

Tips for Cutting Down on Sodium and Salt

- Use spices instead of salt to add flavor to your food. When cooking and at the table, flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar or salt-free seasoning blends.
- Use fresh poultry, fish and lean meat rather than canned, smoked or processed foods.
- For snacks, eat fruit, vegetable sticks, unbuttered and unsalted popcorn or breadsticks.
- Read food labels and choose frozen, fast or prepared foods that are lower in sodium and fat. Cut back on frozen dinners, pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths and salad dressings. These often have a lot of sodium.
- Start your day with breakfast cereals that are lower in salt and sodium.
- Cook rice, pasta and hot cereals with herbs or spices rather than salt. Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta and cereal mixes, which often have added salt.
- Buy vegetables that are fresh, plain, frozen or canned with “no salt added.”
- Drink water or club soda instead of soft drinks high in sodium or sugar.
- When eating out, remove the salt shaker from the table. Limit catsup, pickles and sauces that have a lot of salt or sodium.

My Life Saving High Blood Pressure Control Plan

Write down three reasons you want to control your high blood pressure.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Write down three things you will do right away to control your blood pressure.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Write down the people who can help you control your blood pressure (for example, your husband or wife, a friend, or your health care team).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Use the chart below to write down your blood pressure goal and latest results.

Blood Pressure	
My Blood Pressure Goal: _____	
My Results	Date