

## Hypertension (HTN) – Commonly Asked Questions

This guide is designed to help case managers provide answers to common questions they may hear from clients about the chronic condition hypertension. It is helpful for case managers to keep this guide where they can refer to it quickly when they get questions from clients.

### What do I need to know about hypertension?

#### What is hypertension?

A condition in which the pressure in the blood vessels is higher than normal.

#### Why is this a bad thing?

It increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

#### Is this the same thing as “High Blood Pressure”?

Yes. You will also see it abbreviated as “HTN.”

#### How is it detected?

Through measurement with a blood pressure cuff. Review this chart to understand which BP numbers might be a problem.

#### What do these blood pressure numbers mean?

An individual's blood pressure is defined by two measurements:

- *Systolic* pressure is the pressure in the arteries produced when the heart contracts (at the time of a heart beat)
- *Diastolic* pressure refers to the pressure in the arteries during relaxation of the heart between heart beats

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and /or	HIGHER THAN 120

Blood pressure is reported as the systolic pressure over diastolic pressure (e.g., 120/70 or "120 over 70").

#### If my blood pressure is high on a single measurement, does that mean I have hypertension?

Not necessarily – an actual diagnosis would require more than one measurement and a primary care visit.

#### If my blood pressure is elevated but I feel fine, does that mean I shouldn't worry about it?

No – hypertension USUALLY has no symptoms unless very severe. If you are being treated, your provider will usually make decisions based on your blood pressure measurements.





## So, I have hypertension. What can I do to improve my blood pressure?

### Work with your primary care provider

Medications are often required and can be prescribed by your doctor. Medications used might include chlorthalidone, amlodipine, furosemide, and valsartan.

### Tips for Improving blood pressure

- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a healthy diet that is low in saturated and trans fats and rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fiber, and low-fat dairy products.
- Consume less than 1,500 mg/day of sodium (salt). Even reducing daily intake by 1000 mg can help.
- Limit alcohol to one drink per day if you're a woman or two drinks a day if you're a man.
- Be more physically active. Aim for at least 90 to 150 minutes of aerobic and/or dynamic resistance exercise per week, and/or three sessions of isometric resistance exercises per week.
- Take medicine the way your health care provider tells you.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and work to keep it at that level.

### Where can I read more about hypertension?

- American Heart Association: <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/the-facts-about-high-blood-pressure>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/materials\\_for\\_patients.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/materials_for_patients.htm)
- MedlinePlus: <https://medlineplus.gov/highbloodpressure.html>
- Resources for Integrated Care, *Hypertension and Serious Mental Illness: A Tip Sheet for Navigators*: [https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/behavioral\\_health/navigation\\_services/tip\\_sheets%20](https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/behavioral_health/navigation_services/tip_sheets%20)

