

High Blood Pressure and You

Imagine for a minute that you're sitting in a crowded stadium, watching your favorite football team play. There are thousands of people all around you. Would you ever think that 1 out of 3 people there have high blood pressure? In a packed crowd of 30,000 fans, that's 10,000 people who have high blood pressure.

If you're feeling good about your blood pressure, and your numbers are where they should be, great job! Keep monitoring your blood pressure at each medical checkup, or as often as your doctor may recommend. It's good if you don't have high blood pressure now, but there's a strong chance that you might develop it eventually if you don't keep track of it. In fact, according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), we have a 90 percent chance of developing high blood pressure after age 55.

But don't despair. Keeping blood pressure down is often a matter of lifestyle. The NHLBI offers these six steps to blood pressure control:

- **Reduce salt (sodium) intake.** Sodium causes your body to retain fluid. This constricts your blood vessels and raises blood pressure. Those with healthy blood pressure levels should consume no more than 2,400 milligrams of sodium a day. That's about a teaspoon of salt. If your blood pressure is high, your doctor may recommend no more than 1,500 milligrams a day.
- **Follow a healthy eating plan.** The NHLBI's Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) study found that a low-salt, low-fat diet filled with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains effectively controls blood pressure.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** As your weight rises, so does your risk of high blood pressure. Studies show that losing just 10 pounds can make a difference.
- **Be physically active.** The NHLBI calls for just 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week. For those who don't like to exercise, daily tasks such as vigorous housecleaning, climbing stairs and pushing a stroller for 30 minutes also count.
- **Limit alcohol.** Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure.
- **Quit smoking.** Even though it doesn't directly cause high blood pressure, smoking injures blood vessels. That's especially bad for those with high blood pressure. Once you quit, your risk of having a heart attack is reduced after the first year.

Source:

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute - <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>

This information is intended for educational purposes only, and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your physician for advice about changes that may affect your health.

