

# Avoid

**Salty Foods.** Salt increases the amount of water in the blood, and then the increased volume of blood raises blood pressure. The best way to avoid excess salt is to lower the amount of processed foods in your diet. Almost 80% of an average person's daily salt intake comes from processed foods.

**Excess Alcohol.** Too much alcohol can increase blood pressure. Doctors recommend two or fewer drinks a day for men and one or less for women.

**Smoking.** It damages blood vessels and speeds up the hardening of arteries.



## SMC Heart Center

At Springhill Medical Center, our unique heart center combines our state-of-the-art technology and our specialized expert staff in one building all devoted to heart health. Our heart care programs include:

- Cardiac Rehabilitation
- Mitral Valve Prolapse Clinic
- Vascular and Echocardiogram Labs
- Nuclear Cardiology

### My Blood Pressure

\_\_\_\_\_ Systolic  
\_\_\_\_\_ Diastolic  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date

  
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# high blood pressure

# What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the artery walls. Two numbers are used to measure blood pressure.

- 120** The systolic pressure measures the force while the heart is beating.
- 80** The diastolic number represents the force while the heart is at rest.

Everyone's blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day. If it remains elevated for extended periods of time, it becomes dangerous. High blood pressure, or hypertension, forces the heart to work harder, putting more strain on both the artery walls and the heart. The condition increases your risk for many serious health complications, such as heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure, kidney disease, and blindness.

About 90% of Americans will face hypertension at some point in their lives. The chances of having hypertension increase with age. A person's risk doubles from about one-third to two-thirds between the ages of 45 to 65.

Often called the "silent killer," high blood pressure normally does not show any symptoms, so the only way to diagnose it is to be tested. The good news is that there are many different plans to control high blood pressure effectively. Many times adopting a healthier lifestyle brings down blood pressure, but if lifestyle changes alone are not enough, blood pressure medication can help. Discuss what options are best for you with your doctor. To find a doctor, call our Physician Referral Service at 251.460.5207.

## The Risks of High Blood Pressure

Approximately one in three American adults has high blood pressure. About half of U.S. adults that have high blood pressure have it under control. High blood pressure increases a person's risk for heart disease, the No. 1 cause of death in the world, and stroke, the second most common cause of death worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

### People with uncontrolled high blood pressure are...

- 3** times more likely to develop heart disease.
- 6** times more likely to develop congestive heart failure.
- 7** times more likely to have a stroke. Even people with pre-hypertension (pressure not quite high enough to be considered high blood pressure) are 55% more likely to have a stroke.

## Controlling High Blood Pressure

**Do**

**Know Your Blood Pressure.** Because high blood pressure shows no

symptoms, it is important to regularly check your blood pressure at least once a year to make sure that it is under control.

**Maintain a Healthy Weight.** Losing as little as 10% of your body weight can help decrease blood pressure. To find out if your weight is healthy, use your height and weight to calculate your body mass index (BMI).

**Eat Healthy Foods.** A diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains improves overall health and weight. Also, eating foods low in saturated fats and cholesterol is an important part of healthy eating.

**Exercise.** Moderate aerobic exercise helps the heart pump more efficiently, lowering blood pressure. Doctors recommend that adults exercise for 30 minutes at least four days a week. Springhill Athletic Club, located in Springhill Medical Center's Heart Building, can assist you with your exercise and weight management goals.

**Manage Your Stress.** Hormones produced by stress temporarily raise blood pressure levels and may contribute to long term high blood pressure. Also, stress often encourages other unhealthy behaviors that contribute to high blood pressure. Strategies such as controlled breathing and organizing your schedule can help lower stress.