

# Healthy Blood Pressure: Eating to Lower Your Risk



## What Is High Blood Pressure?

- High blood pressure is also called hypertension.
- It happens when your heart is pushing your blood too hard against blood vessels which can lead to damage.

## Who Is At Risk?

- Pregnant women
- Adults aged 50 and older
- Obese individuals.
- Individuals with diabetes.
- People with a family history of high blood pressure.
- African Americans and Hispanics
- People who smoke, drink heavily, eat a lot of salty foods, or if you don't get enough exercise.

Source: American Heart Association. What Is High Blood Pressure? [heart.org](http://heart.org)

## It's Known As The Silent Killer!

- High blood pressure can damage your brain, eyes, heart, and kidneys quietly over time with no symptoms.
- Think of blowing up a balloon - if you blow the balloon up too hard and too fast, the balloon can pop!



## Systolic Diastolic = Your Blood Pressure

- Systolic - how hard your blood pushes against your blood vessels when your heart beats. This is the top number.
- Diastolic: how hard your blood pushes against your blood vessels when your heart rests between beats. This is the bottom number.
- Refer to a blood pressure chart to see if your numbers are normal or high.



**Talk to your healthcare provider if your numbers are elevated or high.**

## Blood Pressure Readings

Category	Top / Bottom Number
Normal	Below 120/ Below 80
Elevated	120 - 129 / Below 80
High Blood Pressure Stage 1	130 - 139 / 80 - 89
High Blood Pressure Stage 2	Above 140 / Above 90
Emergency Call 911	Above 140 / Above 90

Source: American Heart Association. Understanding Blood Pressure Readings. [heart.org](http://heart.org)

# Healthy Blood Pressure: Eating to Lower Your Risk



## Your Food Choices Can Make A Big Difference In Your Blood Pressure

### Focus on eating:

- Fruits and Vegetables
- Whole grains
- Beans, nuts, legumes
- Lean proteins (chicken, fish)
- DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) meal patterns
- Mediterranean-style meal patterns

### Reduce:

- Foods high in sodium or added salt like fast food, frozen foods, salty snacks, canned foods, and deli/cured meats
- Foods high in saturated fats like fried foods, fatty cuts of beef or pork, processed meats, butter, or lard.
- Foods or drinks high in added sugar like soda, sweet tea, fruit drinks, pastries, and desserts.

**To help reduce your salt intake at home, try looking for “salt-free” or “no sodium added” store mixes. You can also make your own at home.**

- Taco Seasoning - Chili powder, paprika, oregano, cumin, black pepper
- Italian - Oregano, marjoram, basil, thyme, sage
- Cajun - Chili powder, black pepper, garlic, thyme, paprika, cayenne, oregano

## Eating the DASH Way

These trusted websites provide easy tips, recipes, and meal ideas for following the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan.

- American Heart Association - [heart.org](http://heart.org)
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute - [nhlbi.nih.gov](http://nhlbi.nih.gov)
- US Dept. of Health & Human Services - [health.gov](http://health.gov)

## Healthy Choices Start Here

Knowing your risks, checking your numbers, and choosing heart-healthy foods can help protect your health.

***Talk to your healthcare provider for a personalized plan.***



**Need More Help?** Email [health@feedingthegulfcoast.org](mailto:health@feedingthegulfcoast.org) or scan the QR code for more information.