

The logo for 'ask' is presented in a stylized, lowercase font. The letters are orange with a blue outline and are set against a blue circular background that has a gradient and a white border. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the upper right of the letter 'k'.

**ask**®

**ABOUT HIGH  
BLOOD PRESSURE**

A large, semi-circular graphic with a light orange background is centered on the page. It contains a faded image of a medical chart with a grid and a white pill bottle lying on its side with several white pills spilling out. The text 'Your Treatment & You: Working Together for Better Health' is overlaid on the chart in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

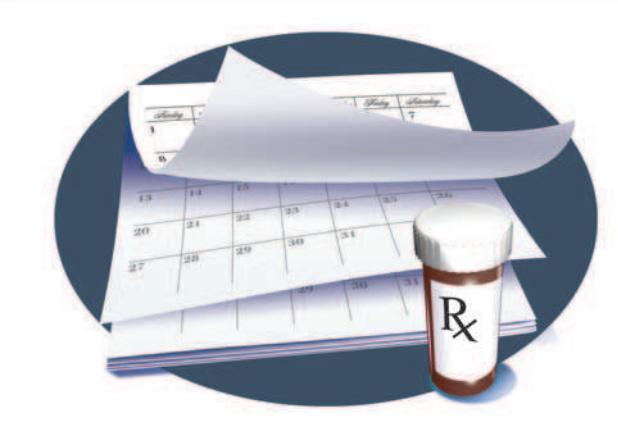
**Your Treatment & You:  
Working Together  
for Better Health**



## Because the more you know, the healthier you can be.

This booklet is designed to help you understand high blood pressure and the things you can do every day to manage it and reduce your risk of other health problems.

As always, talk to your doctor for more information.\* Taking your medicine as directed by your doctor is one of the most important things you can do. If you're like most people, this may be easier said than done.



\*The term "doctor" is used throughout this booklet to represent your healthcare provider and also includes nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

### What You'll Find

### Where You'll Find It

#### Attitudes and Beliefs

**High Blood Pressure—What Is It?**

Page

4-5

**My Blood Pressure Numbers—What Do They Mean?**

6-7

**My Blood Pressure Goals—What Are They?**

8-9

#### Taking Medicines

**Blood Pressure Medicines—How Do They Work?**

10-11

**My Medicines—How Can I Get the Most From Them?**

12-13

#### Lifestyle

**Sticking With My Medicines—What Will Work?**

14-15

#### Talking With My Healthcare Team

**My Doctor Visits—How Can I Get Ready?**

16-17

#### Help From Others

**High Blood Pressure Support—Where Can I Go for Help?**

18-19

**Blood Pressure Tracker**

**Back**

## High Blood Pressure—What Is It?

“How could I have high blood pressure? I feel fine.”

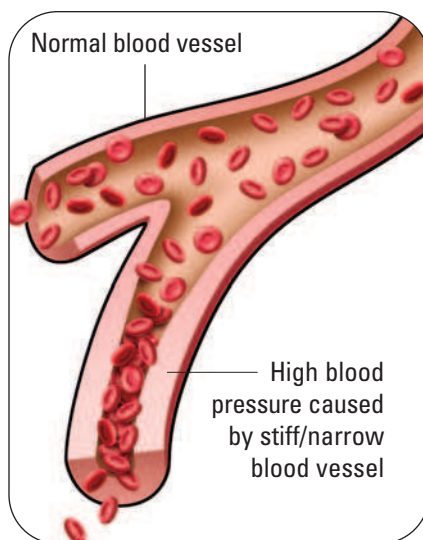
High blood pressure is called a "silent killer" because it usually does not cause any symptoms. Learn more about high blood pressure and how to treat it.

### What is blood pressure?

Your heart pumps oxygen-rich blood through blood vessels to all parts of your body. Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of your blood vessels. Normal blood vessels are wide open and the blood moves freely. This leads to normal blood pressure.

### What is high blood pressure?

- High blood pressure occurs when your blood vessels become stiffer and more narrow.
- Your heart has to work harder to push blood through the blood vessels to all parts of your body.
- If high blood pressure is not treated, it can lead to serious health problems like heart attack and stroke.



“What causes high blood pressure?”

There are many risk factors for high blood pressure. Some of these risk factors can be controlled and others cannot:

Risk Factors You Cannot Control	Risk Factors You Can Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older age</li> <li>• Family history of high blood pressure</li> <li>• Race (African Americans are at higher risk)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being overweight</li> <li>• Drinking too much alcohol</li> <li>• Eating too much salt</li> <li>• Inactive lifestyle</li> <li>• Smoking</li> <li>• Stress</li> </ul>

### Taking care of high blood pressure every day

Talk to your doctor about the changes you can make to lower your blood pressure.

- Get your blood pressure checked at every visit.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Follow a healthy diet that is low in salt (sodium) and fat.
- Start a regular exercise program.
- If you smoke, ask about ways to quit.
- Try to lose weight and keep it off.
- Take your medicine as directed.

*Use a goal checklist. Set goals that you are ready to reach.*

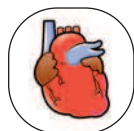


## My Blood Pressure Numbers— What Do They Mean?

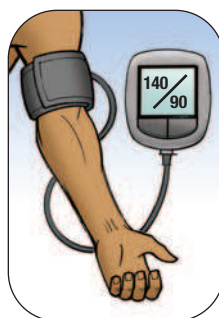
Blood pressure is measured with a cuff that is wrapped around your arm and a pressure gauge that reads two numbers.



The top number (systolic) is the blood pressure when your heart is pumping.



The bottom number (diastolic) is the blood pressure when your heart is resting.



### What do your numbers mean?

Blood pressure goes up and down throughout the day. But when your blood pressure stays above a certain level, it is called high blood pressure or “hypertension.”

If your blood pressure is:	You have:
Less than 120/80	Normal blood pressure
Between 120/80 and 139/89	Pre-hypertension (you are at risk for high blood pressure)
140/90 and above	High blood pressure

## “Why is high blood pressure dangerous?”

If you have high blood pressure, you may feel fine. This is because high blood pressure does not always cause symptoms. It is called the “silent killer” because it puts you at risk for health problems like:



Heart attack or heart failure



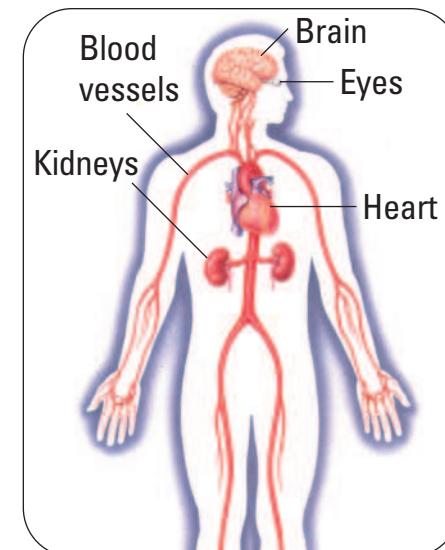
Stroke



Kidney disease



Eye disease



*Taking care of your blood pressure every day may help you prevent and manage health problems that high blood pressure can cause over time.*



## My Blood Pressure Goals— What Are They?

You are the most important person in managing your blood pressure. Talk with your doctor to help you choose one or more goals you are ready to work on now.

### Goal 1



#### Diet

- I will eat a heart-healthy diet that is low in salt and fat.
- My sodium goal will be \_\_\_\_\_ mg per day.
- I will limit the amount of alcohol I drink.

### Goal 2



#### Exercise

- I will exercise for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes \_\_\_\_\_ days per week, if my doctor tells me it is safe.\*
- My doctor and I agree that the best activities for me are \_\_\_\_\_.
- If I notice chest pain, shortness of breath, or chest tightness, I will get emergency help.

### Goal 3



#### Stop Smoking

- I will ask my doctor about how I can quit smoking.
- I will think of all the reasons why I should quit and then take the steps to quit.
- If I start smoking, I will try to quit again.

\*Some medical conditions may make exercise dangerous for some people. Before starting any exercise program, talk to your doctor.

### Goal 4



#### Medicine

- I will take my blood pressure medicine(s) as directed by my doctor.
- I will call my doctor if I have problems.
- I will ask questions when I do not understand.

### Goal 5



#### Check Blood Pressure

- I will have my blood pressure checked at every doctor visit.
- I will reach my blood pressure goal of \_\_\_\_\_.

### Goal 6



#### Doctor Visits

- I will keep my doctor appointments even when I feel fine.
- I will ask my doctor questions when I do not understand something.

### Goal 7



#### Asking for Help

- I will ask for help when I need it.
- I will make time for myself.
- I will let my doctor know if I feel sad or blue.

#### **EMERGENCY:**

**Get emergency medical help right away if you think you are having a heart attack**  
**1) Chest pain or discomfort; 2) Upper body (ie, shoulder, arm, or jaw) discomfort;**  
**3) Shortness of breath; 4) Cold sweats, nausea, or light-headedness**



## Blood Pressure Medicines— How Do They Work?

A healthy lifestyle may not be enough to lower your blood pressure. Your doctor may ask you to take medicines as well. There are different types of blood pressure medicines. Each one works in a different way to lower your blood pressure. Some blood pressure medicines may cause dizziness or drowsiness, especially when you first start taking them.

**Not every medicine is right for everyone. For complete information, including possible side effects and how the medicines you take affect each other, talk with your doctor or pharmacist.**

Over time, you may need more than one kind of medicine to manage your blood pressure. It may take a while before the medicine takes effect. Even when you reach your blood pressure goal, you may need to continue taking your medicine for a long time.

### Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors

- Keep a hormone called angiotensin from being produced.
- Widen blood vessels and help your heart and blood vessels work better.
- Help protect your kidneys from the effects of high blood pressure and diabetes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of your medicine)

### Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs)

- Widen blood vessels like ACE inhibitors, but in a different way.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of your medicine)

### Alpha receptor blockers

- Reduce nerve impulses that tighten blood vessels.
- Reduce the effect of renin, an enzyme in the kidneys.
- Help blood vessels relax and widen.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of your medicine)

### Diuretics or "water pills"

- Help your body get rid of extra fluid and sodium.
- This helps lower blood pressure and makes it easier for your heart to pump blood through the body.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of your medicine)

### Beta blockers

- Make the heart beat more slowly and with less force, which lowers blood pressure.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of your medicine)

### Calcium channel blockers

- Block the flow of calcium into the muscle cells of the heart and blood vessels (too much calcium can make blood vessels squeeze shut).
- When calcium is blocked, blood vessels can relax and deliver more blood and oxygen to the body.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of your medicine)

*Fill out a medicine chart with the help of your doctor or pharmacist.*



## Sticking With My Medicines— What Will Work?

Taking your blood pressure medicine as directed by your doctor is one of the most important things you can do to manage your high blood pressure.



**Not taking your medicine as directed by your doctor means:**

- Your medicines will not work the way they should.
- Your blood pressure may go up.
- You may be at risk for serious health problems, like a heart attack or stroke.
- Your blood pressure may become harder to manage.

“Taking medicines gets in the way of my day.”

Taking more than one medicine at different times each day can be hard. The key is to create a routine that fits your life.

**Here are some useful tips:**

- Where possible, take your medicines with other daily habits, like in the morning when brushing your teeth or in the evening with dinner.
- Ask if your medicines should be taken with or without food. Talk to your doctor about the best time to take your medicines.

**If you sometimes forget to take your medicines:**

- Use a pill box marked with the days of the week. Take it with you when you are away from home.
- Wear a watch. Set an alarm. Leave yourself a note on the bathroom mirror.
- Keep your medicine in a place where you will see it daily.
- Fill out a medicine log or calendar. Keep it with you at all times.



**If you forget to refill your medicine on time:**

- Plan ahead for refills so that you do not run out of your medicine. For example, mark a calendar with “Refill on [date].” Choose a date about a week before you will run out.
- Make sure you have enough refills to last you until your next doctor visit.
- Ask your pharmacy to send you reminders to refill your prescription.



To learn more about what may be getting in the way of taking your medicines, go to [www.takingmeds.com](http://www.takingmeds.com).





## My Doctor Visits— How Can I Get Ready?

You and your doctor are a team in managing your high blood pressure. To get the most from your treatment, talk openly and honestly with your doctor.

“*I am embarrassed to ask my doctor some questions.*”

- All questions are important. Do not be afraid to speak up if you do not understand something.
- Ask a family member to join you for doctor visits. They can write down your doctor’s answers.
- Some people who take diuretics, “water pills,” have to urinate more often. Ask your doctor when it is best to take your diuretic. You may be able to take it earlier in the day to avoid nighttime bathroom visits.

*If you have trouble understanding what your doctor says:*

- Ask for written information about your medicine. Is it available in large print or another language?
- Review the following checklist before each doctor’s visit.

*Side effects may occur with any medicine. Some high blood pressure medicines may cause dizziness or drowsiness, especially when you first start taking them. Tell your doctor about any side effects you may have or have had in the past. Talk with your doctor before stopping your medicine.*

### *Questions to Ask My Doctor or Pharmacist:*

- What is the name of the medicine and how will it help me?

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- How and when do I take the medicine, and for how long?

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- When and how do I refill my prescription?

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- What do I do if I miss a dose?

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- Will other nonprescription or prescription medicines affect my blood pressure medicine?

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- How will I know if my blood pressure medicines are working?

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- What are the possible side effects? What should I do if they occur?

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## High Blood Pressure Support— Where Can I Go for Help?

“ I feel like I am handling this all alone. ”

- Ask a family member or friend to support you, like going with you to your next doctor visit.
- Ask your doctor about a support group for people with blood pressure and related health problems.
- Ask your doctor to help you start a heart-healthy diet that is low in fat and sodium. Your doctor may also refer you to a dietician.

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### *If you have trouble paying for your medicines:*

- Visit [www.togetherxaccess.com](http://www.togetherxaccess.com), [www.gskforyou.com](http://www.gskforyou.com), or [www.PPARx.org](http://www.PPARx.org) for more information.
- Another option is to call 1-800-Medicare or visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

### *Have you felt down or hopeless?*

It is normal for people with high blood pressure and related health problems to feel down from time to time. But if you have been feeling down much of the time, talk to your doctor.

*For more help and information, contact one or more of these hypertension resources:*

#### **American Heart Association (AHA)**

1-800-AHA-USA-1 (1-800-242-8721)

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

#### **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Information Center**

1-301-592-8573

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

#### **Delicious Decisions**

[www.deliciousdecisions.org](http://www.deliciousdecisions.org)

*To learn more about what may be getting in the way of taking your medicines, go to [www.takingmeds.com](http://www.takingmeds.com).*

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