



Health

In this brochure:

- What is hypertension?
- Ways to control your blood pressure
- How high blood pressure affects your overall health and oral health
- Interpreting blood pressure numbers

ADA Healthy Smile Tips

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between your teeth daily.
- Eat a healthy diet that limits sugary beverages and snacks.
- See your dentist regularly for prevention and treatment of oral disease.

For more information about taking care of your mouth and teeth, visit **MouthHealthy.org**, the ADA's website just for patients.



Hypertension

Making the Connection to Your Oral Health



What Is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls and is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). Blood pressure is represented as two numbers. The upper number—**systolic (sis-TOL-ick)** blood pressure—measures the pressure of blood when the heart beats. The bottom number—**diastolic (dye-as-TOL-ick)** blood pressure—measures pressure of blood when the heart rests between beats.

Normal blood pressure is less than 120 over 80.



*Measured in millimeters of mercury, or mmHg

Your blood pressure can be high without any symptoms. For that reason, you should have your blood pressure checked regularly before it may cause problems.

Understanding High Blood Pressure

Sometimes blood pressure is higher than normal for a short period of time, like after exercise or when you are anxious. Blood pressure that is increased for short periods of time is not something to worry about. It typically returns to normal on its own. Blood pressure that stays high all the time is chronic. Chronic high blood pressure can cause health problems and needs to be treated.

People who have chronic high blood pressure are at higher risk of heart and circulatory problems. Hypertension can increase the risk of heart attack and stroke and reduce the blood supply to the arms and legs. Other health conditions that may be related to high blood pressure include diabetes, kidney or thyroid disease, vision problems and dementia. If you are pregnant and have high blood pressure, talk with your doctor.

Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, is a common health condition. Often, there are no symptoms, but it can be serious. In 2022, hypertension caused more than 43,000 deaths in the United States. Hypertension should be managed by your primary care physician or a cardiovascular specialist—a doctor who treats heart-related health conditions and complications. Your dentist also needs to know if you have high blood pressure.

Measuring Blood Pressure

Your dentist, physician or other trained healthcare provider can measure your blood pressure. You can also purchase an at-home blood pressure monitor. Your dentist or physician can help you choose the right tool to measure your blood pressure between doctor and dentist visits.

Blood pressure is usually taken with a cuff that inflates on your upper arm. The cuff measures the pressure of blood when the heart beats, which is recorded as the top number (systolic). When the cuff deflates, it provides the bottom number, which is the pressure of blood on the circulatory system when the heart rests between beats (diastolic).



This table shows how the American Heart Association (AHA) interprets blood pressure readings.

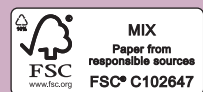
Category	Top Number (Systolic) in mmHg	and/or	Bottom Number (Diastolic) in mmHg
Normal	Less than 120	and	Less than 80
Elevated	120–129	and	Less than 80
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	130–139	or	80–89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (Contact your physician immediately.)	180 or higher	and/or	Higher than 120

Source: <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/understanding-blood-pressure-readings>.

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People with blood pressure in the normal range should keep making healthy choices like eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly.

If your blood pressure is higher than the normal range, talk to your healthcare professional about ways to control it. If your blood pressure is in the **hypertension Stage 1 or Stage 2** range, you should see your physician. He or she may consider prescribing medication based on your risk of heart disease or stroke, or the presence of other conditions such as diabetes, heart failure or kidney disease.

If your blood pressure readings are in **hypertensive crisis**, you need medical attention immediately.

Causes of High Blood Pressure

There are lifestyle factors that can put you at risk for hypertension. Some of these include:

- Obesity
- An unhealthy diet, especially one that is high in salt
- Smoking
- Lack of exercise
- Poorly controlled diabetes

There are also some risk factors for high blood pressure that cannot be changed:

- Family history of hypertension.
- Age—although children and young adults can develop hypertension, it is more common in men younger than 65 years, and women older than 65 years.
- Hypertension also is more common in African American adults, Hispanic adults and Asian adults.

Managing High Blood Pressure

You can make choices that can help keep your blood pressure in a normal and healthy range. Some guidelines include:

- Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight
- Reducing the amount of salt (sodium) you eat
- Getting some exercise—it does not have to be much, just get moving
- Adding fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products into your diet
- Avoiding all forms of tobacco (smoking, vaping and chewing)

In some cases, medication may be prescribed to control your blood pressure. You can talk with your primary care doctor about medication options.

DASH Diet

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) offers **Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH)** to help maintain a healthy blood pressure. It is a flexible and balanced eating plan that helps you create a heart-healthy eating style.

DASH offers tips on putting together healthy meals. For example, a DASH eating plan suggests weekly servings of:

- Vegetables and fruits, especially those that are high in potassium like bananas and sweet potatoes
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy products, whole grains, fish, poultry, beans, nuts and vegetable oils
- Limiting foods that are high in saturated fat, such as fatty meats, full-fat dairy products and tropical oils such as coconut, palm kernel and palm oils
- Limiting sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets
- Limiting alcoholic beverages to 1–2 per day

DASH Eating Plan	
The Benefits: Lowers blood pressure & LDL "bad" cholesterol.	
✔ Eat This	⚠ Limit This
Vegetables	Fatty meats
Fruits	Full-fat dairy
Whole grains	Sugar sweetened beverages
Fat-free or low-fat dairy	Sweets
Fish	Sodium intake
Poultry	
Beans	
Nuts & seeds	
Vegetable oils	

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/DASH

Source: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

The DASH diet also provides guidance on sodium (salt) intake, which increases the risk of hypertension. It recommends you limit sodium to 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day. A **sodium** level of 1,500 mg per day could lower blood pressure even more. The AHA also recommends aiming for 3,500–5,000 mg of **potassium** per day.

To find out how much sodium and potassium are in the food you buy, check the Nutrition Facts label.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
Total Fat 8g	% Daily Value*
Saturated Fat 1g	10%
Trans Fat 0g	5%
Cholesterol 9mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 6mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

(For educational purposes only. These labels do not meet the labeling requirements described in 21 CFR 101.9.)

High Blood Pressure and Your Oral Health

Some dentists may check your blood pressure at every visit. Other dentists may only take your blood pressure before procedures associated with high anxiety, like tooth extractions. If your blood pressure is high, your dentist may need to reschedule the procedure until your blood pressure is in a healthy range.

Patients with high blood pressure may have more bleeding than expected during some dental procedures like deep cleanings, gum surgery or crown preparations. If your blood pressure is higher than 180/110 mmHg, your dentist may postpone any surgical treatment until you have talked with your physician about treatment for hypertension.

Medication Considerations

Many medications used to treat hypertension can affect your oral health. They can cause gum problems including swelling, bleeding and more serious gum disease like loosening of the teeth. Other side effects might include white lacy or burning patches in your mouth, and changes in the way things taste.

Some high blood pressure medications also may give you dry mouth. Dry mouth can cause a few problems such as difficulty chewing and swallowing food, trouble speaking, bad breath and cavities.

It is important to tell your dentist about all the medications and any vitamins or herbal supplements you take—both prescription and those you buy at the store—so that they can watch for any effects they might have on your oral health. Some medications can interact with each other or cause side-effects like increased bleeding.