

Hypertension (HTN) – Commonly Asked Questions

This guide is designed to help case managers provide answers to common questions they may hear from clients about the chronic condition hypertension. It is helpful for case managers to keep this guide where they can refer to it quickly when they get questions from clients.

What do I need to know about hypertension?

What is hypertension?

A condition in which the pressure in the blood vessels is higher than normal.

Why is this a bad thing?

It increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Is this the same thing as “High Blood Pressure”?

Yes. You will also see it abbreviated as “HTN.”

How is it detected?

Through measurement with a blood pressure cuff. Review this chart to understand which BP numbers might be a problem.

If my blood pressure is high in the clinic on a single measurement, does that mean I have hypertension?

Not necessarily – an actual diagnosis would require more than one measurement and a primary care visit.

If my blood pressure is elevated, but I feel fine, does that mean I shouldn’t worry about it?

No – hypertension USUALLY has no symptoms unless very severe.

How is hypertension treated?

With medication and close follow-up with your PCP. Some people can make lifestyle improvements that will reduce need for medication. Some may need always to be on medication.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
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 (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and /or	HIGHER THAN 120



So, I have hypertension - what do I do now?

What can I do to improve my blood pressure?

- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a healthy diet that is low in saturated and trans fats and rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.
- Consume less than 1,500 mg/day of sodium (salt). Even reducing daily intake by 1000 mg can help.
- Eat foods rich in potassium. Aim for 3,500 – 5,000 mg of dietary potassium per day.
- Limit alcohol to one drink per day if you're a woman or two drinks a day if you're a man.
- Be more physically active. Aim for at least 90 to 150 minutes of aerobic and/or dynamic resistance exercise per week, and/or three sessions of isometric resistance exercises per week.
- Take medicine the way your health care provider tells you.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and work to keep it at that level.

Where can I read more about hypertension?

- American Heart Association: <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/the-facts-about-high-blood-pressure>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/materials_for_patients.htm
- MedlinePlus: <https://medlineplus.gov/highbloodpressure.html>
- Resources for Integrated Care, *Hypertension and Serious Mental Illness: A Tip Sheet for Navigators*: https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/behavioral_health/navigation_services/tip_sheets%20