

# Managing your high blood pressure

## Information for patients and families

### What is blood pressure?

- Blood pressure is a measure of the force that pushes blood around the body.
- Your blood pressure includes 2 numbers:
  1. Systolic pressure – the pressure when your heart beats
  2. Diastolic pressure – the pressure when your heart relaxes between beats
- A healthy blood pressure is **120/80** (systolic/diastolic) or **130/80 if you have diabetes**

My blood pressure today is \_\_\_\_\_.

### What happens when I have high blood pressure?

- High blood pressure is dangerous because it makes your heart work harder.
- High blood pressure can increase your risk for heart disease, kidney disease and stroke.



## How can I lower my blood pressure?

### ✓ **Maintain a healthy weight**

- If you are overweight, losing weight is one of the best ways to help you lower your blood pressure. Aim for 5 to 10 percent weight loss.

### ✓ **Increase physical activity**

- Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate activity 4 to 7 times per week (for example: brisk walking, climbing stairs, bicycling, or swimming)

### ✓ **If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation**

- The Canadian Hypertension guidelines suggest having no more than 2 drinks or less per day. Men should have less than 14 drinks per week. Women should have less than 9 drinks per week.
- 1 drink = 1.5 ounces spirits, 12 ounces beer, 5 ounces wine

### ✓ **Stop smoking**

- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about different strategies and supports to help you quit.

### ✓ **Take time to relax**

- Practice stress management and take time for activities you enjoy.

### ✓ **Adopt healthy eating habits**

- Choose lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, fish, lean meats, beans, nuts and seeds. Eat less fats and sweets. For more information talk to your dietitian about how to follow a DASH diet.

### ✓ **Eat less sodium (salt)**

- Reduce your sodium (salt) intake to 2000 mg or less per day. Check out the tips below to help you reduce your sodium intake.

## How can I eat less sodium (salt)?

- ✓ **Avoid adding salt to your food.**
  - Use spices, herbs, lemon juice, Tabasco sauce, vinegar, or no-sodium seasoning such as Mrs. Dash instead.
- ✓ **Use fresh whole foods and cook at home as much as possible.**
  - Fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, and fish are low in sodium.
- ✓ **Avoid processed foods such as canned foods, luncheon meats, and pre-packaged meals.**
  - These foods are very high in sodium.
  - Choose fresh meats instead of luncheon meats and choose fresh cheese instead of processed cheese slices or cheese spreads.
- ✓ **Avoid foods that are very high in sodium such as, potato chips, pretzels, salted nuts, buttery popcorn, salted crackers, pickles, and olives.**
  - Choose the unsalted version of snack foods or have fresh fruit instead.
- ✓ **Ask for the nutrition menu at restaurants.**
  - Restaurant foods are often high in sodium, but you can use the nutrition menu to help you choose items with lower sodium.
- ✓ **Use “low-sodium” products.**
  - Choose foods that say “salt-free”, “sodium-free” or “low-sodium”.
  - Watch out for foods that say “reduced-sodium”, “lower-sodium”, “less salt” or “no added salt” because these foods may still be high in sodium. Compare the amount of sodium on the label of different products to help guide your choice.
- ✓ **Read nutrition labels.**
  - Looking at the nutrition facts label is a great way to figure out how much sodium is in your food.

## How do I read a nutrition facts label?

1. Look at the serving size and compare it to how much you are going to eat.
2. Figure out how much sodium is in the serving size you are going to eat.
3. Use the chart to decide if you should choose that food, only have it sometimes, or avoid it because it is too high in sodium.

<b>CHOOSE</b>	Foods that have less than 200 milligrams of sodium
<b>LIMIT</b>	Foods that have 200 to 400 milligrams of sodium
<b>AVOID</b>	Foods that have more than 400 milligrams of sodium

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g) Servings Per Container About 8	
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b> 230	Calories from Fat 40
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>12%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>12%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>16%</b>
Sugars 1g	
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin A	10%
Vitamin C	8%
Calcium	20%
Iron	45%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

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