



American Heart Association®

Life's Essential 8™

→ for kids

HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE

UNDERSTAND READINGS

Blood pressure is how strongly blood goes through tubes ("arteries") in your body to give your entire body energy. Blood pressure is like water in a water balloon: if there is too much, it can hurt the tubes in your body.¹ Blood pressure is typically recorded as two numbers, one on top ("Systolic") and one on bottom ("Diastolic"), written like this: Read as "117 over 76" millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).²

SYSTOLIC

The top number, the higher of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats (when the heart squeezes).

DIASTOLIC

The bottom number, the lower of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is resting between heart beats.

Blood Pressure (BP) Category	Kids 12 years old and younger	Kids 13-17 years old
Normal BP	Less than 90% for age, sex and height	Less than 120/80 mm Hg
Elevated BP	90-94% for age, sex and height	120/80 to 129/80 mm Hg
Stage 1 hypertension	95% or greater + 11 mm Hg	130-139/80-89 mm Hg
Stage 2 hypertension	95% or greater + 12 mm Hg	140/90 mm Hg or higher

TRACK THE NUMBERS

A diagnosis of high blood pressure must be confirmed by a health care professional. Any unusually low blood pressure readings should also be evaluated. Health care professionals can take blood pressure readings and provide recommendations.³

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

EAT SMART

Eat healthy foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins, and lean animal proteins like fish and seafood.

Limit sugary foods and drinks, red or processed meats, salty foods, refined carbohydrates and highly processed foods. Healthy foods can still taste really good!⁴

MOVE MORE

Be active! Physical activity helps control blood pressure.⁵

MANAGE WEIGHT

Eating healthy and moving more can help with managing weight. Small changes in weight can reduce blood pressure.⁵

DON'T SMOKE OR VAPE

Every time you smoke, vape or use tobacco, your blood pressure can go up which isn't good for your body.⁶

SLEEP WELL

Not getting enough sleep can be harmful to your body and can cause health problems including high blood pressure.⁷

¹What is High Blood Pressure? | American Heart Association

²How High Blood Pressure Is Diagnosed | American Heart Association

³Pediatric Primary Hypertension: An Underrecognized Condition: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association | Hypertension (ahajournals.org)

⁴The American Heart Association Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations | Network American Heart Association

⁵Screening for High Blood Pressure in Children and Adolescents: US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement | Adolescent Medicine | JAMA | JAMA

⁶<https://newsroom.heart.org/news/people-who-vape-had-worrisome-changes-in-cardiovascular-function-even-as-young-adults>

⁷How Does Sleep Affect Your Heart Health? | cdc.gov