High Blood Pressure
How to Make Control Your Goal

It's up to you to successfully manage and control your blood pressure. But it doesn't have to be a daunting task. You can take small, manageable steps to make blood pressure control **your** goal. Here are some tips to show you how.

Engage your health care team

Blood pressure control is a team effort. Engage all of your health care professionals—not just your primary care physician or cardiologist. Your pharmacist, nurses, and other health care specialists can help you control your high blood pressure.

Next time you go in for a visit, make a list of questions you want to ask your health care professional. For example:

- What is my blood pressure goal?
- What are the best ways to reach my goal?
  - Mention what you're already doing to work toward control, including exercising, changing your diet, or taking medications as prescribed.
  - Be honest and realistic with yourself and your health care team about what lifestyle changes you're ready to make and the ones you're not quite ready for.
  - Pick one goal to start working toward. As you achieve success and build confidence, choose another goal to tackle.

Take your medications faithfully

Your health care team has put together a specific medication schedule to help control your blood pressure. You might forget to take your medicine every day, or maybe you're having trouble dealing with the side effects. Remember that your medication is important to control and maintain your blood pressure.

Here are some tips to help you stick with your medication plan:

- Talk to your doctor about any side effects you experience with your medications. If necessary, discuss other treatment options. **Never stop treatment on your own.**
- Make a schedule and set up a system to remind you to take your medications regularly—use a pillbox for every pill, every day, or use smartphone "app" reminders.
  - If your insurance provides mail order delivery, set it up and request a 90-day supply of medications.
  - If this service is not available, schedule all your refills at the same pharmacy at the same time each month so you can pick them up all at once.

Did you know?

Of the 67 million American adults who have high blood pressure, 16 million know they have the condition and are receiving treatment, but their blood pressure still remains too high.

Don's Story

As an avid runner, Don thought he was great shape. When he was diagnosed with high blood pressure during a routine physical exam more than 30 years ago, Don was frustrated. High blood pressure is a common condition among men in his family. Don's grandfather, father, and two younger brothers all had high blood pressure. Because he knew he couldn't control his family history, Don focused on what he could control.

Don committed to understanding his condition and working with his heath care team to improve diet, exercise more, and manage stress. Because of his busy work schedule as a veterinarian and his limited cooking skills, Don's wife supports his efforts by preparing healthy meals with low sodium. No longer able to run marathons, Don walks several times a day with his 15-year-old dog, Sophie. To help relax, Don meditates every day. He also volunteers at a local hospice and shares his love for animals by instructing and evaluating animal assisted therapy volunteers and working with two animal outreach groups.

Don knows that he plays the most important role in controlling his high blood pressure; that's why he's made control his goal. He works closely with his health care team and has a strong support system in his family and colleagues.

Monitor your blood pressure

What's your blood pressure goal? Develop a plan to regularly check your blood pressure, not just at the doctor's office, but at home or at a pharmacy. Track your results in a log or diary to monitor your progress.

Make healthy choices

- Exercise can be a great way to help control your blood pressure. Find a safe place to walk or be more active. Increase the time and intensity of your physical activity as you progress.
- Shop for more fresh fruit, vegetables, and whole grains and fewer prepared foods with high sodium, cholesterol, saturated fat, and trans fat.
- Learn to read labels and choose foods lower in sodium. Lowering your sodium will lower your blood pressure.
- Quit smoking. There are many tools available to help you. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit **Smokefree.gov** for help.

Tools and resources

Million Hearts®, in partnership with the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, has developed online tools to help you track and manage your heart health, including your blood pressure, and provide helpful advice and information. Check out:

- **Heart360®**
- **My Life Check®**

Find and download additional materials to help control your high blood pressure at the **Million Hearts®** website.

Million Hearts® is a national initiative to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. It is led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, two agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services.

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