

# Misconceptions in the treatment of HTN



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**Here, we debunk some myths and highlight ways to reduce your risk for high blood pressure.**

**First Myth:** High blood pressure is over 140/90 mm Hg, and the normal level is increasing with age.

Fact: High blood pressure is over 130/80 mm Hg.

“While high blood pressure used to be defined as over 140/90 mm Hg, that definition has changed in the past few years.

Today, if someone has blood pressure over 130/80 mm Hg and has a history of cardiovascular disease or, if they are at high risk for having a cardiovascular event — their physician may recommend taking blood pressure medication.”

What if only one number is high?

“The top and bottom numbers both matter — if either of them is high, then you have hypertension, and your risk of a heart attack or stroke is increased,”

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**Second Myth:** The signs of high blood pressure are obvious.

Fact: High blood pressure has no symptoms.

“Unless your blood pressure is dangerously high, you will not have any symptoms,”

Garg says. “The long-term damage high blood pressure has on your arteries,

however, occurs regardless of whether you have symptoms or not.”

Chronically high levels of stress and inadequate sleep can both contribute to high blood pressure.

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**Third Myth:** As long as I don't add too much salt to my food, I can eat what I want.

Fact: It's not just table salt you have to worry about.

You may already know that salt causes high blood pressure. But, salt isn't just what you add to your food from the saltshaker. According to Garg, some of the most common sources of dietary sodium also include:

Breads and rolls , Poultry Meat dishes, like meat loaf, Cheese burgers and other sandwiches  
Luncheon meats, like deli ham or turkey, Pizza, Pasta dishes Soups, Cheese, Snack foods, like potato chips and pretzels

"It helps to reduce your dietary sodium intake to less than 2,400 mg a day and to follow the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan, which consists of a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products," he says. "Following the DASH diet may reduce your systolic blood pressure by 8 to 14 mm Hg."

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## **Fourth Myth:** Drinking coffee can raise blood pressure.

Fact: It generally doesn't — but alcohol can.

Because caffeine is a stimulant, you might think it gets your your blood pressure up, however, most research doesn't show that to be the case.

“Regular caffeine consumption doesn't typically raise your blood pressure, but it may be a factor for people who ingest it in high amounts from things like soda, coffee or energy drinks,” Garg says.

Alcohol, on the other hand, does have an impact. “Excessive alcohol intake can raise blood pressure,” he says.

Reducing alcohol consumption can have a positive impact on your blood pressure. Garg points out that limiting alcohol consumption to no more than 2 drinks per day for men and 1 drink per day for women can reduce systolic blood pressure by 2 to 4 mm Hg.

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## **Fifth Myth: When medication brings your blood pressure down, you can stop taking it.**

Absolutely not! Never stop taking your medication without consulting your doctor. Hypertension can be a lifelong disease and you may need to take medication every day for the rest of your life. It's worth it to protect your health.

## **Sixth Myth: If you inherit hypertension, there's nothing you can do about it.**

While it's impossible to prevent inheriting it, you can manage hypertension with lifestyle changes. Exercise, eating a low-salt diet, maintaining a healthy weight, and avoiding alcohol and smoking can have a positive impact on your blood pressure.

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## **Seventh Myth: I don't need to worry about blood pressure, if I'm young.**

Fact: Although hypertension does affect older people, young people can have it, too.

“It's true that high blood pressure is more common among older people,” . “This is because our arteries naturally stiffen as we age, and that increases the resistance within our arteries, which increases blood pressure.”

But younger adults can have high blood pressure, too, and this may be behind a disturbing trend toward more strokes among younger adults. Children and teens can also have high blood pressure, possibly because of an increase in childhood obesity.

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## **Eighth Myth :If I'm on blood pressure medication, I don't have to exercise or watch what I eat.**

Fact: You still need to continue a healthy lifestyle.

“There is no substitute for trying to adhere to a heart-healthy diet and exercise! It is the most important measure you can take to reduce your risk for a heart attack or stroke,” .

“When your doctor starts you on blood pressure medication, it is only because they believe these lifestyle measures are not enough to lower your blood pressure to normal.”



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## **Ninth Myth: Hypertension is curable**

There is currently no cure for hypertension. However, there are ways to manage the condition and reduce its impact on health.

For instance, making the following changes may help:

- ❖ reducing alcohol intake
- ❖ eating a healthful diet
- ❖ exercising
- ❖ managing stress
- ❖ quitting smoking
- ❖ maintaining a moderate weight
- ❖ taking medication

# Summary

Hypertension is both serious and common. Although it can be a lifelong condition, there are many ways to manage it and to reduce the health risks associated with it.

By tackling hypertension-related myths, we can help reduce its impact on society by facing the risk factors head-on and working against them.

**THANK YOU**