

Understanding Your Blood Pressure

A simple guide to what the numbers mean and why they matter

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What Is Blood Pressure?

- Blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. Your heart pumps blood through these arteries to deliver oxygen and nutrients to your body.
- Healthy blood pressure keeps everything running smoothly.

What Do the Two Numbers Mean?

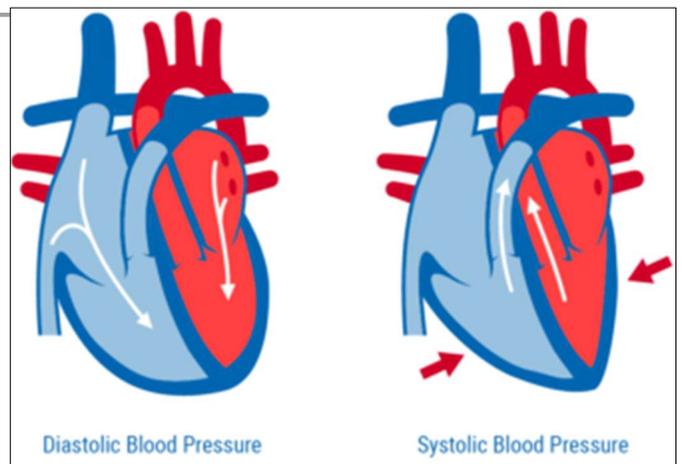
The Top Number (Systolic)

- This is the pressure **when your heart squeezes** to push blood out.
- It tells us how hard your heart is working during a heartbeat.

The Bottom Number (Diastolic)

- This is the pressure **when your heart relaxes** between beats.
- It shows how much pressure is in your arteries at rest.

Both numbers matter.



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How Does Blood Pressure Affect My Health?

- Your arteries are like flexible pipes. When pressure is too high for too long, it puts extra strain on your heart, kidneys, eyes, and brain.
- Healthy blood pressure protects these organs and lowers your risk of heart attack, stroke, and kidney disease.

Why Is High Blood Pressure Called the “Silent Killer”?

- Because most people feel **nothing at all**, even when their blood pressure is dangerously high.
- You can feel perfectly normal while your heart and arteries are under serious stress.
- That’s why regular checks—at home or in the clinic—are so important.



What Is a Healthy Range for Blood Pressure?

For most adults:

Normal: below 120	AND	/ below 80
Elevated: 120–129	AND	/ below 80
Stage 1 Hypertension: 130-139 (High Blood Pressure)	OR	/ 80-89
Stage 2 Hypertension: 140 or higher (High Blood Pressure)	OR	/ 90 or higher
Severe Hypertension: higher than 180	AND/OR	/ higher than 120
(If you don't have symptoms of chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking, call your health care professional; otherwise, call 911.)		
Dangerously high: higher than 180	AND/OR	/ higher than 120
(If you have any of these symptoms — chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking —, call 911)		

Your personal goal may vary depending on your health history.

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Why Does My Home Blood Pressure Machine Pump Up So High at First?

- Automatic cuffs inflate **above** your expected blood pressure so they can slowly release pressure and detect your pulse accurately.
- It may feel tight, but it's normal.
- The machine needs that extra pressure to “find” your true numbers.

Signs and Symptoms of Low Blood Pressure (Hypotension)

Low blood pressure can cause:

- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Fainting
- Blurry vision
- Fatigue
- Feeling weak or unsteady

Some people have naturally low blood pressure and feel fine. Others may feel these symptoms even with mild drops.

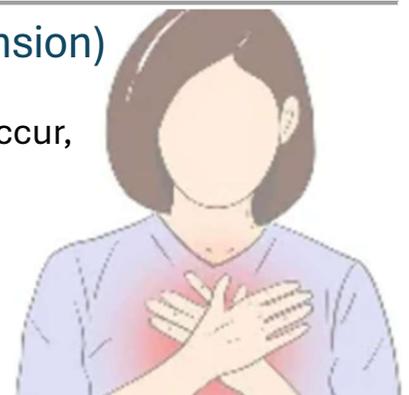
Why Should I Be Concerned About Low Blood Pressure?

- If blood pressure drops too low, your brain and organs may not get enough blood flow.
- This can lead to falls, fainting, or feeling unwell.
- If you notice frequent symptoms, it's important to talk with a healthcare provider.

Signs and Symptoms of High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

Most people have **no symptoms at all**, but when symptoms do occur, they may include:

- Headaches
- Shortness of breath
- Nosebleeds
- Chest pressure
- Feeling flushed or anxious



These symptoms *usually appear only* when blood pressure is very high.

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Why Should I Be Concerned About High Blood Pressure?

Untreated high blood pressure can:

- Damage your heart
- Increase your risk of stroke
- Harm your kidneys
- Affect your vision
- Lead to heart failure

The good news: high blood pressure is very treatable once it's identified.
