



**tip** Go salt-free

Looking for ways to cut back on salt? Here are five tips that may help:

1. Remove the salt shaker from your table.
2. Don't add salt to foods while cooking.
3. Drain and rinse canned foods containing salt before preparation. Use fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables when possible.
4. Avoid seasonings that taste salty, such as soy sauce and bouillon.
5. Talk with your doctor about using a salt substitute.

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**Men's health**

Current Article

**High blood pressure? Bring it down**

By Michael W. Rosen, M.D.

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against artery walls. When this pressure is too high, it can injure blood vessel walls and lead to a heart attack, stroke and kidney disease.

Unfortunately, one in three U.S. adults has high blood pressure — 140/90 mm Hg (millimeters of mercury) or higher. Nearly one-third of them don't know it. That's because the condition often has no symptoms.

The good news is that high blood pressure can be treated and usually controlled. The sooner this happens, the better your chances of avoiding health problems. So, have your blood pressure checked regularly. If it's high, the following tips can help bring it down:

**1. Watch your weight.** If you're overweight, losing weight usually helps lower blood pressure. For most adults, a body mass index (BMI) can be used to help determine if a person is overweight or obese. Overweight is defined as having a BMI of 25 to 29.9. Obesity is defined as having a BMI of 30 or higher.

Your doctor can calculate your BMI, or you can find your own by using the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's online calculator at <http://www.nhlbhsupport.com/bmi>.

**2. Get moving.** Regular exercise is a great way to lose or control weight. Working out also seems to help lower blood pressure. Most healthy adults should aim for at least 2.5 hours of aerobic exercise a week. Experts also recommend strength training twice a week. Be sure to check with your doctor, however, before increasing your physical activity.

**3. Eat healthfully.** Blood pressure tends to be lower among people who eat a diet that's low in fat and cholesterol and high in fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products. Also, avoid processed foods as much as possible.

For more details, ask your doctor about the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan. He or she also may have nutrition suggestions if you're trying to lose weight.

**4. Quit smoking or don't start.** Smoking can damage your blood vessels and increase your risk of high blood pressure. Talk with your doctor about products or programs that can help you stop smoking. It's never too late to quit.

**5. Shake the salt habit.** The sodium in salt increases blood pressure for some people. Healthy adults should consume less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium — approximately one teaspoon of salt — per day. If you have high blood pressure, your doctor may recommend a more restricted diet. To cut back, choose foods low in salt and sodium. Use salt sparingly to flavor food — or substitute with herbs, spices and lemon juice.

**6. Drink alcohol in moderation — if at all.** It can increase blood pressure for some people. Women should have no more than one alcoholic drink per day — and men, no more than two drinks. A drink is equal to:

- 12 ounces of beer (one can)
- 8 ounces of malt liquor
- 5 ounces of wine (about one glass)
- 1.5 ounces, or a shot, of 80-proof liquor (usually the amount in a single cocktail)

**7. Take medication if prescribed.** When lifestyle changes alone aren't enough to lower your blood pressure, medication may be helpful. Take it as directed.

**Keep an online record of your blood pressure**

To track trends in your blood pressure or monitor the effectiveness of your treatment, visit [myuhc.com](http://myuhc.com)®. Click on "Personal Health Record." Under "Track Your Health," select "Blood Pressure."

Dr. Michael Rosen is UnitedHealth Group's clinical lead in developing comprehensive oncology disease management solutions. During his 10 years with the organization, he also has contributed to clinical education and quality initiatives. Dr. Rosen's medical experience includes nearly two decades in the active practice of internal medicine and hematology, in which he holds board certifications. In addition to his clinical skills, he trained as an epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and served as an epidemic intelligence service officer with that organization for several years.

**Men's health**

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