

Food labels can help you choose items lower in sodium, as well as calories, saturated fat, total fat, and cholesterol. The label tells you:

FROZEN PEAS	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1/2 cup	
Servings Per Container: about 3	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories: 60	Calories from Fat: 0
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 125mg	5%
Total Carbohydrate 11g	4%
Dietary Fiber 6g	22%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 15%	Vitamin C 30%
Calcium 0%	Iron 6%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Amount per serving

Nutrient amounts are provided for one serving. If you eat more or less than a serving, add or subtract amounts. For example, if you eat 1 cup of peas, you need to double the nutrient amounts on the label.

Number of servings

There may be more than one serving in the package, so be sure to check serving size.

Nutrients

You'll find the milligrams of sodium in one serving.

Percent daily value

Percent daily value helps you compare products and tells you if the food is high or low in sodium. Choose products with the lowest percent daily value for sodium.

CANNED PEAS	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1/2 cup	
Servings Per Container: about 3	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories: 60	Calories from Fat: 0
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 380mg	16%
Total Carbohydrate 12g	4%
Dietary Fiber 3g	14%
Sugars 4g	
Protein 4g	
Vitamin A 6%	Vitamin C 10%
Calcium 2%	Iron 8%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet

? Which product is lower in sodium?

Answer: The frozen peas. The canned peas have three times more sodium than the frozen peas.

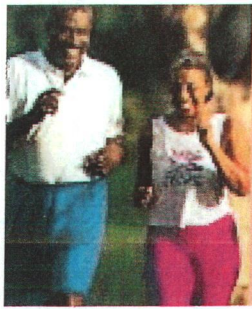
Easy on the Alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure. It also can harm the liver, brain, and heart. Alcoholic drinks also contain calories, which matters if you are trying to lose weight.

If you drink alcoholic beverages, drink only a moderate amount—one drink a day for women, two drinks a day for men.

What counts as a drink?

- 12 ounces of beer (regular or light, 150 calories),
- 5 ounces of wine (100 calories), or
- 1 1/2 ounces of 80-proof whiskey (100 calories).



Lower Your Blood Pressure by Being Active

Being physically active is one of the most important things you can do to prevent or control high blood pressure. It also helps to reduce your risk of heart disease.

It doesn't take a lot of effort to become physically active. All you need is 30 minutes of moderate-level physical activity on most days of the week. Examples of such activities are brisk walking, bicycling, raking leaves, and gardening. For more examples, see box 5.

box 5

EXAMPLES OF MODERATE-LEVEL PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES



COMMON CHORES

Washing and waxing a car for 45–60 minutes
Washing windows or floors for 45–60 minutes
Gardening for 30–45 minutes
Wheeling self in wheelchair for 30–40 minutes
Pushing a stroller 1 1/2 miles in 30 minutes
Raking leaves for 30 minutes
Shoveling snow for 15 minutes
Stair walking for 15 minutes

SPORTING ACTIVITIES

Playing volleyball for 45–60 minutes
Playing touch football for 45 minutes
Walking 2 miles in 30 minutes (1 mile in 15 minutes)
Shooting baskets for 30 minutes
Bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes
Dancing fast (social) for 30 minutes
Performing water aerobics for 30 minutes
Swimming laps for 20 minutes
Playing basketball for 15–20 minutes
Jumping rope for 15 minutes
Running 1 1/2 miles in 15 minutes (1 mile in 10 minutes)

You can even divide the 30 minutes into shorter periods of at least 10 minutes each. For instance: Use stairs instead of an elevator, get off a bus one or two stops early, or park your car at the far end of the lot at work. If you already engage in 30 minutes of moderate-level physical activity a day, you can get added benefits by doing more. Engage in a moderate-level activity for a longer period each day or engage in a more vigorous activity.

Most people don't need to see a doctor before they start a moderate-level physical activity. You should check first with your doctor if you have heart trouble or have had a heart attack, if you're over age 50 and are not used to moderate-level physical activity, if you have a family history of heart disease at an early age, or if you have any other serious health problem.



Manage Your Blood Pressure Drugs

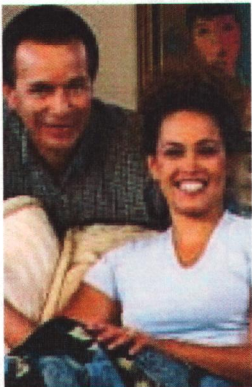
If you have high blood pressure, the lifestyle habits noted above may not lower your blood pressure enough. If they don't, you'll need to take drugs.

Even if you need drugs, you still must make the lifestyle changes. Doing so will help your drugs work better and may reduce how much of them you need.

There are many drugs available to lower blood pressure. They work in various ways. ***Many people need to take two or more drugs to bring their blood pressure down to a healthy level.***

See box 12 for a rundown on the main types of drugs and how they work.

box 12



BLOOD PRESSURE DRUGS	
DRUG CATEGORY	HOW THEY WORK
Diuretics	These are sometimes called “water pills” because they work in the kidney and flush excess water and sodium from the body through urine.
Beta-blockers	These reduce nerve impulses to the heart and blood vessels. This makes the heart beat less often and with less force. Blood pressure drops, and the heart works less hard.
Angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors	These prevent the formation of a hormone called angiotensin II, which normally causes blood vessels to narrow. The blood vessels relax, and pressure goes down.
Angiotensin antagonists	These shield blood vessels from angiotensin II. As a result, the blood vessels open wider, and pressure goes down.
Calcium channel blockers	These keep calcium from entering the muscle cells of the heart and blood vessels. Blood vessels relax, and pressure goes down.
Alpha-blockers	These reduce nerve impulses to blood vessels, allowing blood to pass more easily.
Alpha-beta-blockers	These work the same way as alpha-blockers but also slow the heartbeat, as beta-blockers do.
Nervous system inhibitors	These relax blood vessels by controlling nerve impulses.
Vasodilators	These directly open blood vessels by relaxing the muscle in the vessel walls.

When you start on a drug, work with your doctor to get the right drug and dose level for you. If you have side effects, tell your doctor so the drugs can be adjusted. If you're worried about cost, tell your doctor or pharmacist—there may be a less expensive drug or a generic form that you can use instead.

It's important that you take your drugs as prescribed. That can prevent a heart attack, stroke, and congestive heart failure, which is a serious condition in which the heart cannot pump as much blood as the body needs.

It's easy to forget to take medicines. But just like putting your socks on in the morning and brushing your teeth, taking your medicine can become part of your daily routine. See box 13 for some tips that will help you remember to take your blood pressure drugs.

box 13

TIPS TO HELP YOU REMEMBER TO TAKE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE DRUGS

- Put a favorite picture of yourself or a loved one on the refrigerator with a note that says, "Remember To Take Your High Blood Pressure Drugs."
- Keep your high blood pressure drugs on the nightstand next to your side of the bed.
- Take your high blood pressure drugs right after you brush your teeth, and keep them with your toothbrush as a reminder.
- Put "sticky" notes in visible places to remind yourself to take your high blood pressure drugs. You can put notes on the refrigerator, on the bathroom mirror, or on the front door.
- Set up a buddy system with a friend who also is on daily medication and arrange to call each other every day with a reminder to "take your blood pressure drugs."
- Ask your child or grandchild to call you every day with a quick reminder. It's a great way to stay in touch, and little ones love to help the grown-ups.
- Place your drugs in a weekly pillbox, available at most pharmacies.
- If you have a personal computer, program a start-up reminder to take your high blood pressure drugs, or sign up with a free service that will send you a reminder e-mail every day.
- Remember to refill your prescription. Each time you pick up a refill, make a note on your calendar to order and pick up the next refill 1 week before the medication is due to run out.

You can be taking drugs and still not have your blood pressure under control. Everyone—and older Americans in particular—must be careful to keep his or her blood pressure below 140/90 mmHg. If your blood pressure is higher than that, talk with your doctor about adjusting your drugs or making lifestyle changes to bring your blood pressure down.

Some over-the-counter drugs, such as arthritis and pain drugs, and dietary supplements, such as ephedra, ma haung, and bitter orange, can raise your blood pressure. Be sure to tell your doctor about any nonprescription drugs that you're taking and ask whether they may make it harder for you to bring your blood pressure under control.

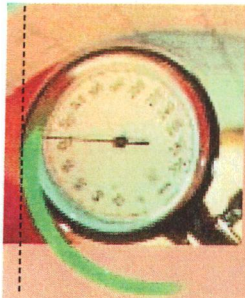
WHAT CAN LEAD TO HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Are you at risk for having high blood pressure?

This list can help you know if you are at risk for high blood pressure. Put a checkmark next to the statements that apply to you:

- ☐ I am older than 50 years
- ☐ I am overweight or obese
- ☐ I smoke
- ☐ I have diabetes
- ☐ I have kidney disease
- ☐ I am African American
- ☐ I am Hispanic or Latino/Latina
- ☐ I am a man who drinks more than 1 ounce of alcohol per day
- ☐ I am a woman who drinks more than half an ounce of alcohol per day
- ☐ A member of my family (mother, father, or other) has high blood pressure

The more checkmarks you made, the greater the chance that you may have high blood pressure now or in the future. **Talk with your doctor about steps you can take to avoid or control high blood pressure.** Some of these steps are listed on page 7.



Action Items To Help Lower Your Blood Pressure

Remember—You *Can* Do It!

1 **Maintain a healthy weight**

- Check with your health care provider to see if you need to lose weight.
- If you do, lose weight slowly using a healthy eating plan and engaging in physical activity.

2 **Be physically active**

- Engage in physical activity for a total of 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Combine everyday chores with moderate-level sporting activities, such as walking, to achieve your physical activity goals.

3 **Follow a healthy eating plan**

- Set up a healthy eating plan with foods low in saturated fat, total fat, and cholesterol, and high in fruits, vegetables, and lowfat dairy foods such as the DASH eating plan.
- Write down everything that you eat and drink in a food diary. Note areas that are successful or need improvement.
- If you are trying to lose weight, choose an eating plan that is lower in calories.

4 **Reduce sodium in your diet**

- Choose foods that are low in salt and other forms of sodium.
- Use spices, garlic, and onions to add flavor to your meals without adding more sodium.

5 **Drink alcohol only in moderation**

- In addition to raising blood pressure, too much alcohol can add unneeded calories to your diet.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, have only a moderate amount—one drink a day for women, two drinks a day for men.

6 **Take prescribed drugs as directed**

- If you need drugs to help lower your blood pressure, you still must follow the lifestyle changes mentioned above.
- Use notes and other reminders to help you remember to take your drugs. Ask your family to help you with reminder phone calls and messages.



Start A Walking Program

Walking does wonders in helping to reduce the harmful effects of high blood pressure.

But you have to leave time in your busy schedule to follow a walking program that will work for you. In planning your walking program, keep the following points in mind:

- ✓ **Choose a safe place to walk.** Find a partner or group of people to walk with you. Your walking partner(s) should be able to walk with you on the same schedule and at the same speed.
- ✓ **Wear shoes with thick flexible soles** that will cushion your feet and absorb shock.
- ✓ **Wear clothes that will keep you dry** and comfortable. Look for synthetic fabrics that absorb sweat and remove it from your skin.
- ✓ **For extra warmth in winter, wear a knit cap.** To stay cool in summer, wear a baseball cap or visor.
- ✓ **Do light stretching** before and after you walk.
- ✓ **Think of your walk in three parts.** Walk slowly for 5 minutes. Increase your speed for the next 5 minutes. Finally, to cool down, walk slowly again for 5 minutes.
- ✓ **Try to walk at least three times per week.** Add 2 to 3 minutes per week to the fast walk. If you walk less than three times per week, increase the fast walk more slowly.
- ✓ **To avoid stiff or sore muscles or joints, start gradually.** Over several weeks, begin walking faster, going further, and walking for longer periods of time.

The more you walk, the better you will feel. You also will use more calories.

Is It OK For Me To Walk?

Answer the following questions before you begin a walking program.

- ☐ ☐ Has your health care provider ever told you that you have heart trouble?
Yes No
- ☐ ☐ When you are physically active, do you have pains in your chest or on your left side (neck, shoulder, or arm)?
Yes No
- ☐ ☐ Do you often feel faint or have dizzy spells?
Yes No
- ☐ ☐ Do you feel extremely breathless after you have been physically active?
Yes No
- ☐ ☐ Has your health care provider told you that you have high blood pressure?
Yes No
- ☐ ☐ Has your health care provider told you that you have bone or joint problems, like arthritis, that could get worse if you are physically active?
Yes No
- ☐ ☐ Are you over 50 years old and not used to a lot of physical activity?
Yes No
- ☐ ☐ Do you have a health problem or physical reason not mentioned here that might keep you from starting a walking program?
Yes No

If you answered yes to any of these questions, please check with your health care provider before starting a walking program or other form of physical activity.

Source: <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/walking.htm>



Check. Change. Control.

Living with high blood pressure

High blood pressure is a lifelong condition. Making healthy changes can help control blood pressure, and you should consider eating healthy and getting more physical activity to be lifelong habits.

The same is true of taking medication. Dealing with side effects can be a difficult matter, but it's worth working with your healthcare provider to manage side effects because taking medication can make a huge difference in how well you manage your blood pressure. Controlling your blood pressure means you're lowering your risk for heart disease, heart attack, diabetes, stroke, and kidney disease. Most people who control their high blood pressure are able to live full, healthy lives.

To keep your blood pressure under control, follow these tips:

- Keep your appointments with your healthcare provider.
- Make changes to your diet and physical activity routines lifelong habits. Remember, you don't have to make dramatic changes all at once. Make gradual changes that you're likely to keep pursuing.
- Follow your healthcare provider's advice, including losing weight if recommended.
- Keep your eyes on the prize: better health. By reminding yourself of your goal, you are putting yourself in a position to succeed.



BOX 3

Following the DASH Eating Plan

Food Group	Daily Servings	Serving Sizes
Grains*	6–8	1 slice bread 1 oz dry cereal† 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal
Vegetables	4–5	1 cup raw leafy vegetable 1/2 cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable 1/2 cup vegetable juice
Fruits	4–5	1 medium fruit 1/4 cup dried fruit 1/2 cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit 1/2 cup fruit juice
Fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products	2–3	1 cup milk or yogurt 1 1/2 oz cheese
Lean meats, poultry, and fish	6 or less	1 oz cooked meats, poultry, or fish 1 egg†
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	4–5 per week	1/3 cup or 1 1/2 oz nuts 2 Tbsp peanut butter 2 Tbsp or 1/2 oz seeds 1/2 cup cooked legumes (dry beans and peas)
Fats and oils§	2–3	1 tsp soft margarine 1 tsp vegetable oil 1 Tbsp mayonnaise 2 Tbsp salad dressing
Sweets and added sugars	5 or less per week	1 Tbsp sugar 1 Tbsp jelly or jam 1/2 cup sorbet, gelatin 1 cup lemonade

* Whole grains are recommended for most grain servings as a good source of fiber and nutrients.

† Serving sizes vary between 1/2 cup and 1 1/4 cups, depending on cereal type. Check the product's Nutrition Facts label.

The DASH eating plan shown below is based on 2,000 calories a day. The number of daily servings in a food group may vary from those listed depending on your caloric needs. Use this chart to help you plan your menus or take it with you when you go to the store.

Examples and Notes	Significance of Each Food Group to the DASH Eating Pattern
Whole wheat bread and rolls, whole wheat pasta, English muffin, pita bread, bagel, cereals, grits, oatmeal, brown rice, unsalted pretzels and popcorn	Major sources of energy and fiber
Broccoli, carrots, collards, green beans, green peas, kale, lima beans, potatoes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes	Rich sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber
Apples, apricots, bananas, dates, grapes, oranges, grapefruit, grapefruit juice, mangoes, melons, peaches, pineapples, raisins, strawberries, tangerines	Important sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber
Fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk or buttermilk, fat-free, low-fat, or reduced-fat cheese, fat-free or low-fat regular or frozen yogurt	Major sources of calcium and protein
Select only lean; trim away visible fats; broil, roast, or poach; remove skin from poultry	Rich sources of protein and magnesium
Almonds, hazelnuts, mixed nuts, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, kidney beans, lentils, split peas	Rich sources of energy, magnesium, protein, and fiber
Soft margarine, vegetable oil (such as canola, corn, olive, or safflower), low-fat mayonnaise, light salad dressing	The DASH study had 27 percent of calories as fat, including fat in or added to foods
Fruit-flavored gelatin, fruit punch, hard candy, jelly, maple syrup, sorbet and ices, sugar	Sweets should be low in fat

† Since eggs are high in cholesterol, limit egg yolk intake to no more than four per week; two egg whites have the same protein content as 1 oz of meat.

§ Fat content changes serving amount for fats and oils. For example, 1 Tbsp of regular salad dressing equals one serving; 1 Tbsp of a low-fat dressing equals one-half serving; 1 Tbsp of a fat-free dressing equals zero servings.