



National Aboriginal Diabetes Association



Blood Pressure – Understanding and Managing It For a Healthier You

High Blood Pressure or Hypertension is measured using two numbers, such as 120/80. The first number is called systolic blood pressure (SBP) and represents the surge of pressure travelling through the arteries at every heartbeat. The second number is called diastolic blood pressure (DBP) and represents the pressure between the heart beats, or when the heart relaxes.

Blood pressure varies throughout the day, but if it is usually above the healthy range, it is called high Blood pressure or hypertension. Having diabetes increases your risk of developing high blood pressure and other cardiovascular problems, because diabetes leads to hardening of your arteries.

The exact causes of high blood pressure are not known, but several factors and conditions may play a role in its development, including: Smoking, being overweight or obese, lack of physical activity, too much salt in the diet, too much alcohol consumption (more than 1 to 2 drinks per day), stress, older age, genetics, family history of high blood pressure, chronic kidney disease, diabetes, Adrenal and thyroid disorders.

You cannot change the following factors: age, ethnicity, diabetes but here are some changes that you can make: increasing your physical activity levels, reducing sodium (salt) intake, introducing more fruit/vegetables in your diet, losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight, limiting alcohol intake, decreasing smoking, and managing your stress.

Many Canadians with hypertension and diabetes have uncontrolled blood pressure. Early diagnosis, treatment and keeping BP in the normal range can reduce your risk of developing many complications of diabetes. If you have hypertension you may not feel sick, but hypertension damages blood vessels and can have important effects on your health. For instance, uncontrolled BP leads to an increased risk of Stroke, Heart attack, Heart failure, Dementia, Kidney (renal) disease, Eye problems (retinopathy) and Erectile dysfunction.

By the numbers...		
	Systolic	Diastolic
With diabetes	Less than 130mmHg	Less than 80mmhg
Normal	<120	<80
Pre-hypertension	120-139	80-89
Stage 1 Hypertension	140-159	90-99
Stage 2 Hypertension	>160	>100

It is important to have your blood pressure checked regularly. High blood pressure has no warning signs or symptoms – which is why it is often called a “silent killer”. Some small changes can make a big difference in your life. Here are just a few:

- Have your blood pressure checked at least once per year by a health care professional or more frequently if you have high blood pressure
- Know what your blood pressure is and remember that both numbers are important. If the numbers are consistently high, you need to make changes in your lifestyle.
- Take control, by being more physically active. Do not sit for longer than 2 hours at a time. Here are some [home exercise routines](#) for you to consider
- Eat more of the following; vegetables, fruits, whole grains and lean meat, fish and poultry. Limit fast foods, canned foods or foods that are bought prepared or those that are high in salt and sugar, saturated or trans fat, such as shortening, lard, palm or coconut oil.

- Eat more home cooked meals. Home cooked meals generally contain fresh ingredients and are low in salt (Sodium) sugar and fat. Convenience foods contain high Sodium (salt), sugar and fat.
- Reduce or refrain from smoking. Smoking increases the risk of developing heart problems and other diseases.
- Reduce your stress. Many good strategies for [reducing stress](#) include journaling, socialization, volunteering, physical activity, meditation, [mindfulness](#), and expressing [gratitude](#) which all contribute to psychological, emotional, and physical well-being.

Food Labels – What do they mean?

Nutrition Facts	
Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (250 mL) / par 1 tasse (250 mL)	
Amount Teneur	% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 80	
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0 %
Saturated / saturés 0 g + Trans / trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium / Sodium 115 mg	5 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 12 g	4 %
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 11 g	
Protein / Protéines 9 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	15 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	0 %
Calcium / Calcium	30 %
Iron / Fer	0 %
Vitamin D / Vitamine D	45 %

The Nutrition Facts label can help you choose foods lower in sodium. Buy products that are labeled with ≤ 5% daily value of sodium

Salt / Sodium Intake Guide per Serving

	Mg	%
Too much	> 360	≥ 15%
Watch out	121-360	6%-14%
Go ahead	0-120	0-5%

To decrease blood pressure, consider reducing sodium intake towards 2,000 mg (5g of salt or 87mmol of sodium) per day.¹

When checking sodium levels, focus on serving size, mg & % daily value of sodium listed.

The following table is a quick example of different foods and their Sodium content. To decrease blood pressure, adults should consume less than 2000 milligrams (mg) each day. Note that a ½ tsp of salt is equivalent to 1, 150 mg of sodium. So, put down the salt shaker and be mindful that the small changes you make can make a difference. Take charge of your food choices. Use the chart to find the lower sodium and healthier food choices. For more information on foods containing low sodium please visit: [Eat Right Ontario](#). Also visit <http://www.hypertension.ca/en/professional/resources> for a Power point presentation on “Dietary Sodium – Shaking the Habit and “High Blood Pressure in People with Diabetes – Are you at Risk?²

Here is a list of some foods with high to low salt/sodium content			
	Sodium (mg)		Sodium (mg)
Raisin bran muffin – larger	800	Multigrain bread – 2 slices	300
Butter – 2 pats	75	Peanut Butter – 1 Tbsp	75
Banana	1	Flavoured coffee – 16 oz	300
Coffee with 2 oz 1% milk	32	Pastrami deli meat	1225
Lettuce & cucumber	0	Dill pickle	385
Carrot sticks	60	Apple	0
Fast food chicken burger	990	Grilled chicken breast	64

Remember, as you choose lower sodium foods more often, you will develop a preference for foods with less salt.

¹Hypertension Canada. <http://www.hypertension.ca>. <http://www.hypertension.ca/en/hypertension/what-can-i-do/limit-saltsodium-intak>.

²Hypertension Canada. <http://www.hypertension.ca>. <http://www.hypertension.ca/en/chep>.