AltaMed
QUALITY CARE WITHOUT EXCEPTION™

Blood Pressure

What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the measure of the force of blood pushing against the artery walls. The heart pumps blood into the arteries, which carry blood throughout the body. High blood pressure occurs when the force of blood against the artery walls is too strong.

Why is high blood pressure harmful?

- It makes your heart work harder
- It has no symptoms, so many people do not know they have it
- It can put you at risk for heart disease, stroke, heart attack, and kidney and eye problems

How is blood pressure measured?

Your blood pressure is measured by two numbers: a systolic "top number" and a diastolic "bottom number." The top number measures the force of blood when the heart pumps. The bottom number measures the force of blood between heartbeats.

CATEGORY	Systolic mmHg (top number)		Diastolic mmHg (bottom number)
Normal	< 120	and	< 80
Prehypertension	120–129	and	< 80
Hypertension (Stage 1)	130–139	or	80–89
Hypertension (Stage 2)	> 140	or	> 89
Hypertensive Crisis	> 180	and/or	> 120

Ways to lower your blood pressure:

- Use less salt in your food; try seasoning with herbs and spices instead
- Be physically active
- Do not smoke
- Limit alcohol
- Drink less caffeine (coffee, tea, soda)
- Manage your stress

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