

THE NEW NORMAL BLOOD PRESSURE RANGE

Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale Provides 10 Tips for Controlling Blood Pressure

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Just when you thought you knew the correct blood pressure range, a new stricter guideline for what's considered normal has been developed. The new normal range for blood pressure recommended by the American Heart Association is below 120/80.

In addition, a new category called pre-hypertension, has been added to identify those at high risk for developing high blood pressure.

Pre-hypertension is considered to be anywhere between 120-139 (systolic) /80-89 (diastolic).

Unsure where you fall? See your physician soon for a blood pressure check, especially if it's been more than two years since your last one. In the meantime, here are ten tips for keeping your blood pressure numbers in the normal category:

- **Eat a heart-healthy diet** - Emphasize plenty of grains, fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy foods.
- **Limit sodium** - Ideally, keep it below 2,000 milligrams per day. It's not enough to forgo the salt shaker; watch your intake of prepared and processed foods too.
- **Achieve a healthy weight** - Losing as few as ten pounds may reduce your blood pressure significantly.
- **Exercise** - Vigorous walking for 30 minutes most days of the week will lower blood pressure and help with

weight loss. More vigorous exercise is even better.

- **Don't smoke** - One cigarette raises your blood pressure for about an hour. Therefore, even a 10 cigarette per day habit elevates your blood pressure for most of the day.

- **Limit alcohol** - Cut back to a moderate level. For men, no more than two drinks a day. For women, no more than one drink a day.

- **Decrease caffeine intake** -

Caffeine is a mild stimulant that can increase blood pressure transiently. Many sodas, tea, coffee, and chocolate all have caffeine.

- **Make changes in your routine to lower stress** - Get organized. Simplify your schedule. Maintain good social relationships. Practice positive thinking.

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- **Incorporate relaxation techniques** - Try deep breathing exercises, guided imagery, meditation and biofeedback.

- **Get plenty of sleep** - Go to sleep and awaken at a consistent time each day. A bedtime ritual such as taking a warm bath or reading may help.

If, after trying these tips for three to six months, your blood pressure still hasn't decreased, it is important that you see your physician. Medication, in addition to these healthy lifestyle changes, may help. If your blood pressure is at the level of Stage 2 hypertension, it is important that you see your physician right away.

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To schedule an appointment, call 480-301-4141.