

**Visit our website!**

The UK HEEL program website is packed with useful information, including previous health bulletins. Visit us at [www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL](http://www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL)



# ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN

Reprinted by:  
K-State Research & Extension  
Atchison County Office  
405 Main/PO Box 109  
Effingham, KS 66023  
913-833-5450  
[www.atchison.ksu.edu](http://www.atchison.ksu.edu)

**MARCH 2010**

## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: HYPERTENSION

**B**lood pressure is the force of blood through the body in arteries. High blood pressure often has no signs or symptoms. The only way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to be tested for it. Many Americans do not fully understand the value of the information held in these two numbers.

### What do the Numbers Mean?

Blood pressure is recorded as two numbers—the systolic pressure (as the heart beats) over the diastolic pressure (as the heart relaxes between beats). The systolic number is on top and the diastolic number is on the bottom. For example, normal blood pressure is written as 120/80 mmHg (millimeters of mercury) and expressed verbally as “120 over 80.”

### What Is a Normal Blood Pressure?

The Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure has classified blood pressure measurements into several categories:

**“Normal” blood pressure** – Systolic pressure less than 120 and diastolic pressure less than 80 mmHg

**“Prehypertension”** – Systolic pressure of 120 to 139 and/or diastolic pressure of 80 to 89 mmHg

**Stage 1 Hypertension** – Blood pressure greater than systolic pressure of 140 to 159 and/or diastolic pressure of 90 to 99 mmHg or greater

**Stage 2 Hypertension** – Systolic pressure of 160 or greater and/or diastolic pressure of 100 mmHg or greater



### How is Hypertension Diagnosed?

Most doctors will diagnose a person with high blood pressure based on two or more elevated readings that are taken on several occasions. A consistent blood pressure reading of 140/90 mmHg or higher is considered high blood pressure, another term for hypertension.

### Why are the Numbers Important to Us?

High blood pressure is dangerous because it makes the heart work too hard. It also makes the walls of the arteries hard. High blood pressure increases the risk for heart disease and stroke, the first- and third-leading causes of death for Americans. High blood pressure can also cause other problems, such as heart failure, kidney disease, and blindness.

**Continued on the back** 

## *A 10-minute walk once a day will put you on the path to better health.*

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

#### Treatment

Adopting healthy lifestyle habits is an effective first step in both preventing and controlling high blood pressure. If lifestyle changes alone are not effective in keeping your

***High blood pressure is dangerous because it makes the heart work too hard. It also makes the walls of the arteries hard.***

pressure controlled, it may be necessary to add blood pressure medications. Your healthcare provider may prescribe more than one medication to get your blood pressure controlled. It is important that you take the medication as prescribed and tell the provider of any and all other medications you may already take. Once high blood pressure develops, it usually lasts a lifetime. The good news is treatment can control high blood pressure.

#### Prevention

Lifestyle changes can prevent and control high blood pressure. You can prevent and control high blood pressure by taking action. These include:

- Losing weight if overweight (losing 10 pounds can help)
- Increasing physical activity (walking 30 to 60 minutes each day)
- Following a healthy eating plan that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy foods
- Choosing and preparing foods with less salt and sodium
- Stopping the use of tobacco products, especially smoking cigarettes
- Limiting the use of alcoholic beverages. If you drink, drink in moderation.

If you are pregnant make sure you are under a doctor's care. High blood pressure is a major cause of complications in pregnancy.

Reduce your risk with physical activity. Regular physical activity can reduce your risk of developing or dying from heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure. Physical activity doesn't have to be difficult or take up too much time. A 10-minute walk once a day will put you on the path to better health.



#### SOURCES:

- <http://www.cdc.gov>
- <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>
- <http://www.hrsa.gov>
- <http://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/guide/frequently-asked-questions>

Adapted from the August 2005 HEEL Health Bulletin

ADULT  
**HEALTH  
BULLETIN**  
MARCH 2010

Written by: Travonia Brown-Hughes, Ph.D., MCH Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Kentucky HEEL program

Edited by: Connee Wheeler

Designed by: Rusty Manseau

Download past health bulletins!

[www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL/Bulletins](http://www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL/Bulletins)

