

6 Ways to Lower Blood Pressure

Nearly two-thirds of Americans are either currently fighting high blood pressure or have elevated blood pressure. And even if your blood pressure is normal now, it's important to keep an eye on it—especially if high blood pressure runs in your family or if you've put on some weight lately. It's called the silent killer because by the time you start to feel its effects, it's often too late to correct the damage that's been done. Use this short list to keep your numbers in check.

1. **Check your blood pressure regularly.** Besides getting a wellness checkup every year, you can buy a blood pressure monitor to keep on hand at home (some even connect to apps on your phone for easy tracking) or use a self-service kiosk at most pharmacies. Be sure to let your doctor know if your numbers start to creep up above the normal range.
2. **Take your medication as prescribed.** Your doctor needs to know right away if you start any new drugs or have side effects with current medications. And don't



- stop taking any medication without talking to your doctor first.
3. **Eat a rainbow of veggies.** Try to get an array of colors onto your plate. Think nutrient-packed foods like broccoli, green beans, spinach, carrots, peppers, onions, and Brussels sprouts.
4. **Pay attention to the sodium in your food.** Always read labels, and try not to go over 2300 mg of sodium per day. If you are diagnosed with high blood pressure or take medication for it, keep your sodium intake under 1500 mg per day.
5. **Plan ahead when you're headed to a restaurant.** Look up menu items online beforehand so you can make the best and healthiest choice for you.

6. **Be more active.** Make a game out of it—even a dance party in your living room can raise your heart rate!

Normal Blood Pressure

Less than 120/80

Elevated

Between 120-129
and less than 80

Stage One Hypertension

Between 130-139
or 80-89

Stage Two Hypertension

Greater than or equal to
140 or 90

Hypertensive Crisis
(Emergency care needed)

Greater than 180 and/or 120

Resource: ahajournals.org, cdc.gov

Stay Protected Against the Flu Virus

This year's flu season is on track to be the worst in history. People aged 65 years and older, those with chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes, pregnant women and young children are at increased risk of serious complications with the flu. *If you haven't already gotten a flu shot, it's the number 1 way to keep the flu at bay.* Here are five other things you can do.



Keep covered. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your upper sleeve or elbow—don't use your hands.



Keep clean. Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer. Disinfect things that get touched often—like doorknobs, light switches and TV remotes.



Keep away. People touch their face an average of 3 times a minute. Keep hands away from your nose, eyes and mouth—especially in public.



Keep your distance – Flu viruses can be spread up to 6 feet when an infected person coughs, sneezes or even speaks. Know someone with the flu? Stay away. The same goes for if you get the flu: keep coworkers healthy by staying home to rest.



Stay strong. Get enough sleep, manage stress, eat healthy foods and stay active to keep your body in fighting shape to ward off infection.

How Do You Know If It's the Flu?

Fatigue, fever or chills, body aches, coughing, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children)

If you start to get any of these symptoms, see your doctor within 48 hours to talk about getting antiviral medication, which could help you get better faster. (Note: Not everyone with the flu will get a fever.)

Resource: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Stuffed Sweet Potato With Hummus Dressing

This superfood-packed lunch is delicious and quick to prepare!

Serves 1.

Ingredients:

- 1 large sweet potato, scrubbed
- ¾ cup chopped kale
- 1 cup canned black beans, rinsed
- ¼ cup hummus
- 2 tablespoons water

Recipe courtesy of [eatingwell.org](https://www.eatingwell.org). For full nutrition values, click [here](#).

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Directions:

1. Prick sweet potato all over with a fork. Microwave on High until cooked through, 7 to 10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, wash kale and drain, allowing water to cling to the leaves. Place in a medium saucepan; cover and cook over medium-high heat, stirring once or twice, until wilted. Add beans; add a tablespoon or two of water if the pot is dry. Continue cooking, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is steaming hot, 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Split the sweet potato open and top with the kale and



bean mixture. Combine hummus and 2 tablespoons water in a small dish. Add additional water as needed to reach desired consistency. Drizzle the hummus dressing over the stuffed sweet potato.