



Life Saving Tips About... High Blood Pressure and P.A.D.

What is the link between high blood pressure and P.A.D.?

High blood pressure increases your risk of having a heart attack, stroke, eye problems and kidney disease. People who have high blood pressure also have a higher risk of having Peripheral Arterial Disease or P.A.D. Over time, high blood pressure can harm the walls of blood vessels. The walls become rougher and thicker and there is a greater buildup of plaque. This causes the arteries to harden and narrow, making it harder for blood to flow through the blood vessels.

Treating high blood pressure is a very important part of treating P.A.D. You can prevent or delay a heart attack, stroke and other health problems by having your blood pressure checked at every health care visit (or at least two to four times a year) and by taking action to reach your blood pressure goal.

What is high blood pressure?

It is normal for your blood pressure to rise and fall during the day. For example, it may be higher when you exercise and lower when you sleep. When it stays high over time, it means your blood moves through your vessels with too much force, and you have high blood pressure.

Blood pressure is a measure of the force of blood flow against the inside of the artery walls. It is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). When your health care team checks your blood pressure, they record two numbers—for example, 130 over 80 (or 130/80 mmHg). Both numbers are important.



- The **first number** is the pressure as your heart beats and pushes blood through the blood vessels. This is called the *systolic* (sis-tol-ic) pressure. Systolic pressure below 120 is normal; a reading of 140 or higher means you have high blood pressure.
- The **second number** is the pressure when the heart relaxes between beats. This is called the *diastolic* (dy-as-tol-ic) pressure. Diastolic pressure below 80 is normal; 90 or higher means you have high blood pressure.

High blood pressure is dangerous because it makes the heart work too hard and the force of its blood flow can harm arteries. Known as the “silent killer,” high blood pressure often has no warning signs or symptoms. Once it occurs, it tends to last a lifetime.

The good news is that high blood pressure can be controlled. Many research studies show that high blood pressure can be treated and that treatment can save your life. It can reduce your chances of having a heart attack, a stroke or heart failure. For people with P.A.D. who have diabetes, controlling your high blood pressure also can help lower your chances of having eye and kidney disease.

What should my blood pressure goal be?

Work with your health care team to reach a blood pressure goal of less than 140 over 90 (140/90 mmHg). If you have P.A.D. and diabetes, you have a higher risk of heart, eye and kidney disease. That is why your goal should be a little lower—less than 130 over 80 (130/80 mmHg).



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