

Blood Pressure Test: What the Numbers Mean

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood as it pushes against the walls of your arteries. Arteries are blood vessels that carry blood away from your heart.

Why do I need a blood pressure test?

The test measures how hard blood is pushing on your arteries. A test is the only way to know if your blood pressure is too high. You can't tell just by how you feel. That is why high blood pressure is called "the silent killer."

If your blood pressure is too high, talk to your doctor about ways to lower it.

Why does blood pressure matter?

If your blood pressure is too high for too long, it can make arteries weak. That may make you more likely to have:

- ◆ Heart disease
- ◆ Kidney disease
- ◆ A stroke

Blood pressure numbers

A blood pressure test result has two numbers, for example: 130/80. That is said "130 over 80."

- ◆ The 1st number is the score when your heart beats and pumps blood. It is always the higher number. This is called systolic.
- ◆ The 2nd number is the score when your heart relaxes between beats. It is always the lower number. This is called diastolic.

Normal	Systolic Diastolic under 120 under 80 <i>AND</i>	Keep up the good work!
At risk (Prehypertension)	Systolic Diastolic 120-139 <i>OR</i> 80-89	Make healthy lifestyle changes.
High	Systolic Diastolic 140 or over <i>OR</i> 90 or over	Talk to your doctor.

Sources:

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbp

www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/doctor-visits/screening-tests/get-your-blood-pressure-checked#the-basics_1