

HEALTHY LIVING CHRONICLES

The New Hypertension Guidelines



Last November, the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association released new hypertension guidelines. They included changes to related definitions. The new guidelines also highlighted new thresholds for starting medications for hypertension and more aggressive treatment targets. **Dr. Sufia Syed, Doctors Community Practices at Laurel, provides a brief overview of some of these changes.**

First, let's cover a few basic definitions provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- ✚ **Hypertension** – Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries, which carry blood from your heart to other body parts. Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day. But if it stays high for a long time, it can damage your heart and lead to health problems. Also known as high blood pressure or the “silent killer,” it has no warning signs or symptoms.
- ✚ **Systolic blood pressure** – It measures the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart beats.
- ✚ **Diastolic blood pressure** – It measures the pressure in your blood when your heart rests between beats.

The new guidelines have resulted in an estimated 30 million more people being categorized as having hypertension. In addition to helping people identify this health issue early and make important lifestyle changes to minimize the risk of long-term cardiovascular conditions, the new system places a new emphasis on blood pressure measurement. It includes a consideration of other measurements that can be taken at home, grocery stores, health fairs, etc.

Also, the new guidelines:

- ✚ Eliminated the “pre-hypertensive” category
- ✚ Introduced an “elevated” blood pressure category, which starts at 120/80
- ✚ Established a stage 1 measurement, which now starts at 130/80
- ✚ Lowers targets for blood pressure control
- ✚ Emphasizes lifestyle management in the early stages

Hypertension Improvement Strategies

Lose Weight and Monitor What You Eat

- ✚ Try following a DASH or Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension diet, which encourages the eating of foods that have reduced sodium and increased nutrients

- ✚ Reduce your sodium intake to less than 1,500 mg per day
- ✚ Increase your potassium intake to 3,500 mg per day

Increase Your Physical Activity

- ✚ Try to exercise for at least 30 minutes a day
- ✚ Consider walking, Zumba and other fun activities as part of your exercise plan

Limit Your Use of Alcohol

- ✚ Limit your intake of alcohol to two drinks or less a day for men
- ✚ Limit your intake of alcohol to one drink or less a day for women

The New Blood Pressure Measurements¹

SYSTOLIC DIASTOLIC	
<120mmHg — AND — <80mmHg	Normal: Less than 120/80 mmHg
120 - 129 mmHg — AND — <80mmHg	Elevated: Systolic between 120-129 and diastolic less than 80
130 - 139 mmHg — OR — 80 - 89 mmHg	Stage 1: Systolic between 130-139 or diastolic between 80-89
≥140 mmHg — OR — ≥90mmHg	Stage 2: Systolic at least 140 or diastolic at least 90 mmHg
180+ mmHg — AND / OR — 120+mmHg	Hypertensive Crisis: Systolic of 180+ and/or diastolic 120+ with patients needing prompt changes in medication. It applies when there are no other indications of problems or need for immediate hospitalization if there are signs of organ damage ²

Source: American Heart Association News

¹ Consult your physician for individual recommendations.

² Hypertension Crisis information clarified by Dr. Sufia Syed.





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