



# managing high blood pressure

High blood pressure is when your blood presses too hard against the walls of your blood vessels. High blood pressure rarely produces symptoms, but over time, it can cause serious health problems.

Think about it this way. Which one is easier to move - a small pebble or a large boulder? Right now, your high blood pressure is a small pebble, but you need to take steps now to make sure it doesn't become a large boulder later in life.

## > Why is High Blood Pressure a Problem?

High blood pressure over a long period of time can cause changes in the walls of your blood vessels. If the blood vessel walls thicken or become rough, they can cause your heart to pump too hard. It can cause the following health problems later in life:

- **Heart Attack:** The higher your blood pressure, the greater risk of a heart attack.
- **Stroke:** Blood clots may form along a roughened blood vessel wall. This can reduce blood flow to your brain, causing a stroke.
- **Damage to Other Organs:** Damaged blood vessels can restrict blood flow to other organs, such as kidneys and eyes, and can impact how well they function.

## > Reading Nutrition Labels

- Pay attention to the serving size. The nutritional value will reflect the serving size on the label and may be different from the amount you actually eat, which is the portion.
- A healthy intake of sodium is about 600-800 mg per meal (based on three meals per day), or a total of 2,000 mg or less throughout the day.
- Low sodium foods or snacks should have 140 mg sodium or less per serving.

Compare the Sodium Content on These Two Snacks:

	> High sodium	> Low sodium
	Pepperidge Farm's Goldfish Crackers 100 Calorie Packs	Pop Secret's Kettle Corn 1 Cup
Calories	100	20
Total Fat	3.5 g	0.5g
Sat. Fat	1 g	0 g
Trans Fat	0 g	0 g
Cholesterol	5 mg	0 mg
<b>Sodium</b>	<b>170 mg</b>	<b>30 mg</b>
Total Carbs.	14 g	3 g
Dietary Fiber	1g	0.5 g
Sugars	0 g	0 g
Protein	3 g	0.5 g
Calcium	20 mg	0 mg

## › Steps to Lower Your Blood Pressure

- **Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Make healthy food choices and participate in physical activity on a regular basis.
- **Eat a Colorful Diet:** A diet with lots of fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy foods combined with lower salt intake can help.
- **Physical Activity:** Physical activity can help lower high blood pressure and maintain a healthy blood pressure. Try to get 60 minutes of physical activity that gets your heart rate up every day. It can also help reduce the risk of diabetes and improve self-esteem and self-confidence.
- **Limit Sodium (Salt) Intake:** Processed and preserved foods, such as pickles, canned soup, pizza, deli meat and chips generally have higher sodium. Limit your sodium (salt) intake to less than 2,000 mg a day (1,500 mg is a great goal) to lower your blood pressure.

## › Shaking the Salt Habit: Tips to Reduce Salt and Sodium

- Try new spices or pepper instead of salt to season foods. Using herbs, lemon, lime, vinegar or salt-free seasonings can help keep the flavor but reduce your salt intake.
- Choose reduced sodium or no-salt added foods and condiments when available.
- Buy fresh, plain, frozen or canned vegetables with “no-salt added.”
- Rinse canned foods, such as tuna and vegetables to remove some of the excess sodium in the liquid.
- Limit bacon, ham, pre-sliced sandwich or deli meats; food packaged in salty water (such as pickles, olives and sauerkraut); and condiments (such as mustard, salad dressings and barbecue sauce). Try low-sodium versions of any of these foods and use condiments sparingly!

