

# Blood Pressure and Diabetes

## What You Need to Know



### The heart is an amazing, life-giving organ

The heart works well under pressure, but blood pressure that gets too high (hypertension) makes your heart work harder. People develop hypertension as a result of many conditions, including injury to the kidneys from diabetes. If it is not treated, hypertension can cause damage to your heart and blood vessels, raising your chances of heart attack, stroke, worsening kidney problems, amputation, and blindness. There may not be any warning signs or symptoms.

An estimated 4 out of 5 American Indian and Alaska Native people with diabetes also have hypertension.

It is important to have your blood pressure checked often. Anyone, including youth, can develop high blood pressure, but it is more likely to occur as you get older.

Hear my voice, the wind,  
The buffalo,  
The drumbeat,  
The voice of your ancestor,  
Giving of spirit, giving  
Of love, giving of life,  
Our ancestors, show us  
The way,  
Strong heart, strong body,  
Strong Mind

—by a Native Youth

(From “Honoring the Gift of Heart Health” manual)



## What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of the blood against the walls of your blood vessels. Blood pressure is needed to circulate blood through the body.

Blood pressure readings have two numbers, such as 120/80.

The top number (120) is the pressure in the heart and blood vessels when the heart beats. This is called systolic pressure.

The bottom number (80) is the pressure in the heart and blood vessels when the heart is at rest. This is called diastolic pressure.



Blood Pressure	Systolic (mmHg)		Diastolic (mm Hg)
Normal	Less than 120	and	Less than 80
Elevated	120-129	and	Less than 80
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)	130 or Higher	or	80 or Higher



# Keeping Blood Pressure in Control

Your health care team can help you manage your blood pressure and lower your risk for complications. What changes could you make to control your blood pressure?



▶ Take prescribed blood pressure medication.



▶ Choose foods lower in sodium. See [Sodium Fact Sheet](#).



▶ Decrease or quit commercial tobacco.

▶ Move more. Even a 15-minute walk most days helps.



▶ Eat more fruits and vegetables.

▶ Aim for a healthy weight.



▶ Limit alcohol to no more than 1 drink a day for women, 2 for men.



▶ Get enough sleep.



▶ Find healthy ways to decrease stress. See [Healthy Coping Tips](#).