

## 10 WAYS TO IMPROVE HEALTH IN SENIORS LIVING WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



### Managing high blood pressure is essential for senior health

High blood pressure (also known as HBP or hypertension) is a serious condition that's common among older adults.

In fact, about [75 million](#) American adults have high blood pressure – about 1 in 3. But only about half of these people have their condition under control.

High blood pressure is often called the “silent killer” because it has no symptoms. That's a problem because it damages blood vessels and significantly increases the risk of serious (sometimes fatal) health conditions.

There's no quick cure, but high blood pressure can be managed well with lifestyle changes and prescription medication.

We explain why high blood pressure is so dangerous and share 10 lifestyle changes that lower blood pressure and improve your older adult's health.

### High blood pressure can seriously damage health

It's important to manage or lower blood pressure because untreated high blood pressure significantly increases the risk of serious conditions like:

- [Coronary artery disease](#)
- [Heart attack](#)
- [Heart failure](#)
- [Stroke](#)
- [Vascular dementia](#)
- Kidney [disease](#) or [failure](#)
- [Vision loss](#)

- [Angina](#)
- [Peripheral artery disease](#) (PAD)
- Shortness of breath during light physical activity or exercise

We've got 10 ways to help your older adult live a healthier lifestyle and lower or maintain their blood pressure.

Plus, if your older adult is already on blood pressure medication, a healthy lifestyle could also [help their medication](#) work more effectively.

They don't have to make all these changes at the same time – that might be too big of an adjustment.

Instead, ease them into it by choosing one or two of their top issues and gradually improving those. After those changes become part of their regular routine, keep working through the rest of the list.

### **1. Regularly monitor blood pressure**

Keeping track of your older adult's blood pressure is key to reducing it. After all, it's tough to improve something that you can't measure.

Get a [home blood pressure monitor](#) to take measurements daily or weekly. Keep a notebook to record the date and blood pressure measurement so you can track changes over time. It also shows when lifestyle changes are working.

Use the American Heart Association's [handy chart](#) to see which category your older adult's blood pressure is in – from normal through the 4 levels of high blood pressure.

### **2. Take medications as prescribed**

If your older adult's doctor has prescribed medication to control blood pressure, be sure they follow instructions – take pills on time, don't skip doses, and don't cut pills in half. Get prescriptions refilled ahead of time so they won't run out of medicine.

If anything is unclear or confusing or if [side effects](#) come up, tell the doctor right away so they can find a solution.

### **3. Maintain a healthy weight**

Those who are overweight could lower blood pressure by losing just 10 pounds. That may even allow them to take less blood pressure medication.

### **4. Eat heart-healthy foods**

Adjusting eating habits is an effective way to lower blood pressure. Focus on whole foods, less fat, and more fruits and vegetables. The [DASH diet](#) is a helpful guide.

### **5. Use less salt (sodium)**

Reducing the use of salt also helps control high blood pressure. The goal is to stay below 1500 mg of sodium per day.

### **6. Exercise regularly**

Regular exercise helps lower blood pressure. Aim for moderate activity at least 2.5 hours a week.

Walking is an excellent activity and can be done inside the house, outside in nature, or somewhere like a shopping mall.

### **7. Don't smoke**

When someone smokes, the nicotine raises blood pressure and heart rate. Smoking also causes arteries to tighten, which also increases blood pressure.

## **8. Drink less alcohol**

Drinking alcohol increases blood pressure. If your older adult drinks, limit it to 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women.

## **9. Manage stress**

Blood pressure rises when someone is feeling stressed, so it's best to keep stress levels low to reduce blood pressure.

Some people may benefit from [meditation](#) and [relaxation](#). Others might relax with exercise or by immersing themselves in a hobby like art, gardening, or crossword puzzles.

## **10. Other healthy lifestyle habits**

Leading a healthy lifestyle also helps lower blood pressure. That means getting enough sleep and drinking plenty of water.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Drink More Water**

- Improve Senior Sleep by Reducing Pain and Discomfort**

- Establish a Daily Routine**