Prevention Matters

For Appointments and Referrals Call
Office of Women's Health
1-800-793-8090
www.PreventionMatters.org

County of Los Angeles
Public Health

Blood Pressure & Heart Disease

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force created by the heart as it pushes blood in and out of the arteries. Each time the heart beats, the blood is pumped in and out and creates a surge of pressure in the arteries. This is called the systolic pressure. When the heart relaxes between beats, the blood pressure goes down and this is called the diastolic pressure.

Blood pressure is expressed as: **Systolic pressure**
Diastolic pressure

- **Ideal**: Less than 120/80.
- **Pre-hypertension**: 120/80-139/89. See your health care provider and discuss lifestyle methods to lower your blood pressure.
- **Hypertension Stage 1**: 140/90 – 159/99. See your health care provider to recheck your blood pressure and to discuss possible need for medication.
- **Hypertension Stage 2:** 160/100 – 179/109. See your health care provider as soon as possible.
- **Critical**: 180/110 or above. Seek immediate medical care.

Ways to lower your blood pressure include:

- Eat less salt. Recommended salt intake is less than one teaspoon of salt per day. Salt can make blood pressure worse, so cutting back is a good idea. Instead of salt, use other seasonings such as pepper, garlic and vinegar.
- Quit smoking. Nicotine can increase blood pressure.
- Keep a healthy weight. Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Be more active. Exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. Speak with your health care provider before starting an exercise program if you have Stage 2 hypertension or higher.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Women should have no more than 1 drink of alcohol a day.
- Take blood pressure medication if recommended by your health care provider.

Be Active, Eat Smart, Quit Smoking, Get Checked!

This resource was developed by the Los Angeles County Office of Women's Health for educational purposes. It does not take the place of the instructions from your health care provider. Discuss the risks and benefits of therapies with your doctor.

County of Los Angeles California