

# Blood Pressure



Blood Pressure (BP) is the pressure that your blood puts on blood vessel walls as it circulates. During each heartbeat, BP varies between a maximum (systolic) and a minimum (diastolic) pressure. This is why your blood pressure is described using two numbers. (e.g. 120/80 mmHg)

## What Does Having High BP Mean?

Many things can cause high BP such as genetics, certain medical conditions, lack of physical activity, increased salt (sodium) intake and having excess weight.

Having high BP makes it harder for your heart and other organs to work well. Over time it can lead to things such as stroke or heart/kidney failure.

## What is a Healthy BP for Your Child?

It varies based on age. Your doctor can discuss with you your child's healthy BP range

## What Can Physical Activity Do for BP?

Regular physical activity over an extended period of time has been shown to decrease BP in those with higher levels. Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines recommends children (ages 5-17) get at least 60 minutes of activity daily.

## How Can Stress Affect Your BP?

Stress in your child's life can make their BP increase. You can help your child manage or prevent stress by:

- Have a regular schedule
- Have reasonable expectations on homework
- Don't 'over program' your child. Build in downtime to allow time for rest.
- Have shared fun on a regular basis
- Listen to their concerns and help them to problem-solve
- Be a good role model!

## What Can Healthy Eating Do for BP?

A diet high in sodium can lead to high BP so make healthy choices as often as you can.

The World Health Organization's recommendations for sodium are **a maximum of 2000mg of sodium per day.**

- Most Canadians eat ~ 3500mg + of sodium per day! That's almost twice as much as we need!!!

Micronutrients such as potassium, calcium and magnesium have also been proposed as a complement to sodium guidelines to help with BP regulation and the prevention of heart disease.

- It is recommended to have **a minimum of 3500mg of potassium per day.**
- Vegetables, fruits, milk, yogurts, beans, nuts and seeds are great sources of these nutrients in your diet!!!



## What Foods Contain Salt?

Processed foods contribute most of the salt in our diet. Words to watch out for in the ingredient list are: salt, sodium, monosodium glutamate (MSG), sea salt.

Examples of processed foods are:

- Potato chips, pretzels, crackers
- Convenience Foods (e.g. fast food, frozen dinners, prepackaged pasta or rice dishes, packaged soup mixes/ cubes)
- Processed Meats (e.g. bacon, bologna, wieners, lunch meats, salt meat)
- Prepared sauces/ condiments (e.g. soya, ketchup, teriyaki, jarred/ canned sauces)

## Quick Check!

Use this chart to help you when grocery shopping. **Red** means stop choose least often, **Yellow** means slow -you may want to limit how often you eat this food, **Green** means GO!

Too Much	400+mg of sodium
Watch Out	200-400mg of sodium
Go Ahead	0-200mg of sodium

**Check: Is the label serving size the same as your serving size?**

## Key Health Messages

- Encourage your child to participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day that makes them sweat.
- Try flavoring food with seasonings like herbs, spices, lemon juice and garlic instead of high sodium condiments like ketchup, mustard and soy sauce.
- Choose fresh fruit, vegetables and whole grains.
- Omit adding salt to food.
- Read the labels. Choose foods that have less than 5% of daily value (DV) for sodium.
- Choose no added salt foods when you buy canned food.
- Have your child get at least 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Discuss options with your doctor. Take prescribed medications.



## Goal Setting

- Start with small goals. If your goals are too big or if you are looking for results too quickly, you may be setting yourself up to fail. So aim to set small, realistic goals-ones that you can accomplish.
- Make a list of reasons why it is important to make these changes for your health. Use this list as a positive reminder to keep going with achieving your goals.
- Notice and focus on what you have achieved! Each and every positive step should be celebrated!
- Seek support from family, close friends and your health care team as needed.