

# Acute High Blood Pressure: Care Instructions



## Your Care Instructions

Acute high blood pressure is very high blood pressure. It's a serious problem. Very high blood pressure can damage your brain, heart, eyes, and kidneys.

You may have been given medicines to lower your blood pressure. You may have gotten them as pills or through a needle in one of your veins. This is called an IV. And maybe you were given other medicines too. These can be needed when high blood pressure causes other problems.

To keep your blood pressure at a lower level, you may need to make healthy lifestyle changes. And you will probably need to take medicines.

Be sure to follow up with your doctor about your blood pressure and what you can do about it.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

- See your doctor as often as he or she recommends. This is to make sure your blood pressure is under control. You will probably go at least 2 times a year. But it may be more often at first.
- Take your blood pressure medicine exactly as prescribed. You may take one or more types. They include diuretics, beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors, calcium channel blockers, and angiotensin II receptor blockers. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- If you take blood pressure medicine, talk to your doctor before you take decongestants or anti-inflammatory medicine, such as ibuprofen. These can raise blood pressure.
- Learn how to check your blood pressure at home. Check it often.
- Ask your doctor if it's okay to drink alcohol.
- Talk to your doctor about lifestyle changes that can help blood pressure. These include being active and managing your weight.
- Don't smoke. Smoking increases your risk for heart attack and stroke.

## When should you call for help?

**Call** anytime you think you may need emergency care. This may mean having symptoms that suggest that your blood pressure is causing a serious heart or blood vessel problem. Your blood pressure may be over 180/120.

For example, call if:

- You have symptoms of a heart attack. These may include:
  - Chest pain or pressure, or a strange feeling in the chest.
  - Sweating.
  - Shortness of breath.
  - Nausea or vomiting.
  - Pain, pressure, or a strange feeling in the back, neck, jaw, or upper belly or in one or both shoulders or arms.
  - Lightheadedness or sudden weakness.
  - A fast or irregular heartbeat.
- You have symptoms of a stroke. These may include:

- Sudden numbness, tingling, weakness, or loss of movement in your face, arm, or leg, especially on only one side of your body.
- Sudden vision changes.
- Sudden trouble speaking.
- Sudden confusion or trouble understanding simple statements.
- Sudden problems with walking or balance.
- A sudden, severe headache that is different from past headaches.
- You have severe back or belly pain.

**Do not wait** until your blood pressure comes down on its own. Get help right away.

**Call your doctor now or seek immediate care if:**

- Your blood pressure is much higher than normal (such as 180/120 or higher), but you don't have symptoms.
- You think high blood pressure is causing symptoms, such as:
  - Severe headache.
  - Blurry vision.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your blood pressure measures higher than your doctor recommends at least 2 times. That means the top number is higher or the bottom number is higher, or both.
- You think you may be having side effects from your blood pressure medicine.

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