



High Blood Pressure Fact Sheet



[Blood pressure](#) is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries that carry blood from your heart to other parts of your body. Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day, but it can damage your heart and cause health problems if it stays high for a long time. High blood pressure is also called hypertension.

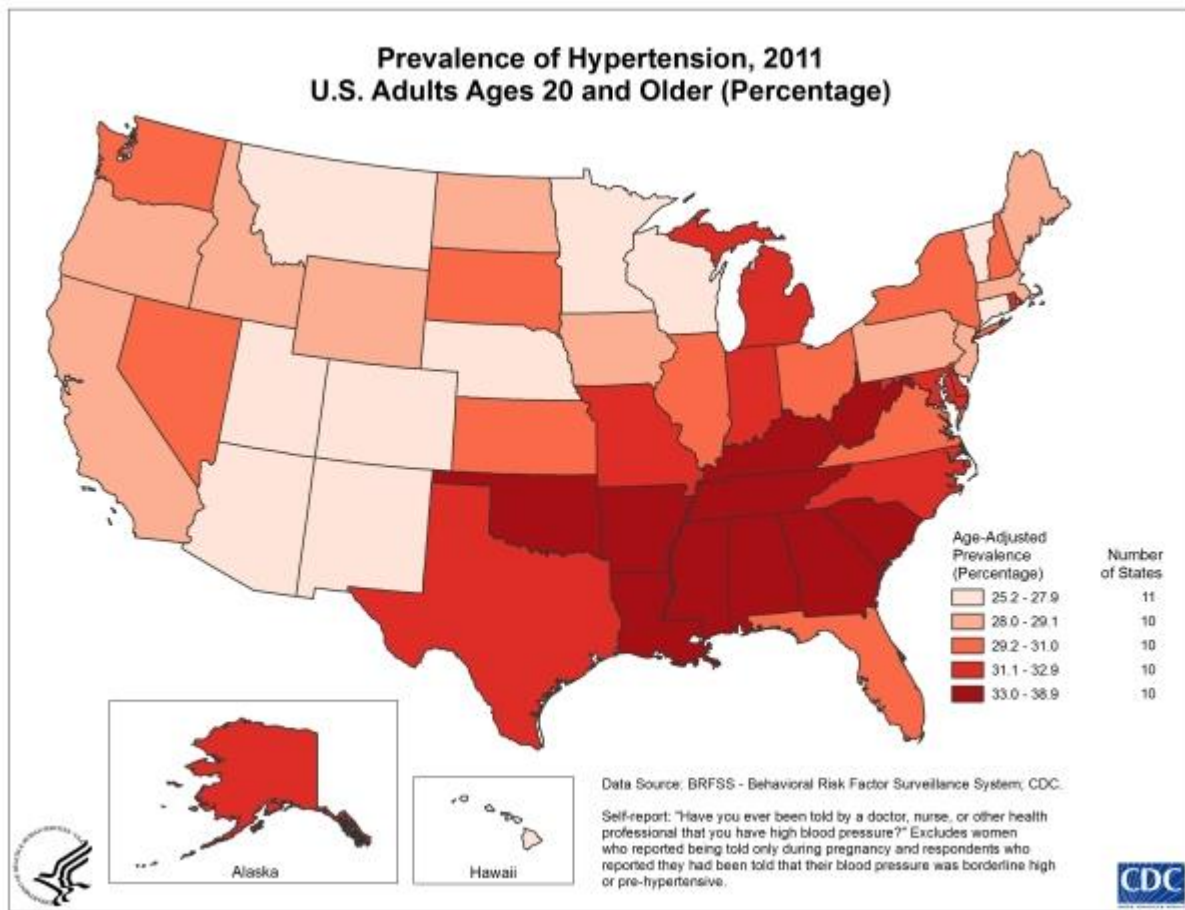
High Blood Pressure in the United States

- Having high blood pressure puts you at risk for [heart disease](#) and [stroke](#), which are leading causes of death in the United States.¹
- **67 million** American adults (31%) have high blood pressure—that's **1 in every 3 adults**.³
- About **1 in 3 American adults** has **prehypertension**—blood pressure numbers that are higher than normal—but not yet in the high blood pressure range.³
- Only **about half (47%)** of people with high blood pressure have their condition under control.²
- High blood pressure was a primary or contributing cause of death for more than **348,000 Americans** in 2009—that's nearly **1,000 deaths each day**.¹
- High blood pressure costs the nation **\$47.5 billion** each year. This total includes the cost of health care services, medications to treat high blood pressure, and missed days of work.¹



Rates of High Blood Pressure Vary by Geography

High blood pressure is more common in some areas of the United States than in others. Below is a map showing the self-reported rate of hypertension by state in 2011. However, this likely underreports the true effect of hypertension in each state. About 1 in 5 adults is unaware of having high blood pressure and would not report having it.²



Source: [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](https://www.brfss.gov/)

Risk Factors for High Blood Pressure

Having certain medical conditions can increase your chances of developing high blood pressure. These conditions include

- [Prehypertension](#).
- [Diabetes](#).

Unhealthy behaviors can also increase your risk for high blood pressure, especially for people who have one of the medical conditions listed above. Unhealthy behaviors include

- Smoking tobacco.
- Eating foods high in [sodium](#) and low in potassium.
- Not getting enough physical activity.
- Being obese.
- Drinking too much alcohol.

Signs and Symptoms of High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure usually has no warning [signs or symptoms](#), so many people don't realize they have it. There's only one way to know whether you have high blood pressure: Have a doctor or other health professional measure it. Measuring your blood pressure is quick and painless.

What Blood Pressure Numbers Mean

Blood pressure is measured using two numbers. The first number, called **systolic** blood pressure, represents the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart beats. The second number, called **diastolic** blood pressure, represents the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart rests between beats. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg).



The chart below shows normal, at-risk, and high blood pressure levels. A blood pressure less than 120/80 mmHg is normal. A blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or more is too high. People with levels from 120/80 mmHg to 139/89 mmHg have a condition called prehypertension, which means they are [at high risk for high blood pressure](#).

Blood Pressure Levels	
Normal	systolic: less than 120 mmHg diastolic: less than 80mmHg
At risk (prehypertension)	systolic: 120–139 mmHg diastolic: 80–89 mmHg
High	systolic: 140 mmHg or higher diastolic: 90 mmHg or higher

Controlling High Blood Pressure

Keeping your blood pressure levels in a healthy range usually involves **taking medications**, **reducing sodium** in the diet, getting **daily physical activity**, and **quitting smoking**.

CDC's Public Health Efforts Related to High Blood Pressure

State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Chronic Diseases

CDC-funded programs in state health departments promote changes to policies and systems in health care, work site, school, and community settings to prevent and control chronic diseases. Programs in all 50 states work to identify and monitor chronic diseases and to put into action basic strategies to improve health, such as promoting physical activity in schools and work sites. CDC funds enhanced efforts in 32 states—such as improving access to healthy food—to build on the basic activities funded across all states.

[Million Hearts®](#)




Million Hearts® is a national, public-private initiative of the Department of Health and Human Services to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. Co-led by CDC and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the initiative brings together communities, health care professionals, health systems, nonprofit organizations, federal agencies, and private-sector partners to improve care and empower Americans to make heart-healthy choices.

[WISEWOMAN](#)


CDC funds 21 WISEWOMAN projects with 19 states and two tribal organizations. WISEWOMAN helps women with little or no health insurance reduce their risk for heart disease, stroke, and other chronic diseases. The program helps women aged 40–64 years improve their diet, physical activity, and other health-related behaviors. WISEWOMAN also provides blood pressure tests and other chronic disease screening.

Web Sites with More Information About High Blood Pressure

For more information about high blood pressure, visit the following Web sites:

- [Medline Plus](#) 
- [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#) 
- [American Heart Association](#) 

References

1. Go AS, Mozaffarian D, Roger VL, Benjamin EJ, Berry JD, [et al. Heart disease and stroke statistics—2013 update: a report from the American Heart Association](#) . *Circulation*. 2013;127:e6–e245.
2. CDC. [Vital signs: awareness and treatment of uncontrolled hypertension among adults—United States, 2003–2010](#). *MMWR*. 2012;61(35);703–9.
3. Egan BM, Zhao Y, Axon RN. US trends in prevalence, awareness, treatment, and control of hypertension, 1988–2008. *JAMA*. 2010;303(20):2043–50.