

# Bathroom Briefs

Your line to good health!

Developed by: Health Promotion & Disease Prevention  
Section, Forsyth County Department of Public Health



## May is High Blood Pressure Education Month

### Quick Facts

- About 74.5 million people in the United States have high blood pressure, which is also called *hypertension*. Hypertension increases the risk for heart disease and stroke, the first and third leading causes of death in the United States.
- Researchers estimate that high blood pressure will cost \$76.6 billion in direct and indirect costs in 2010.

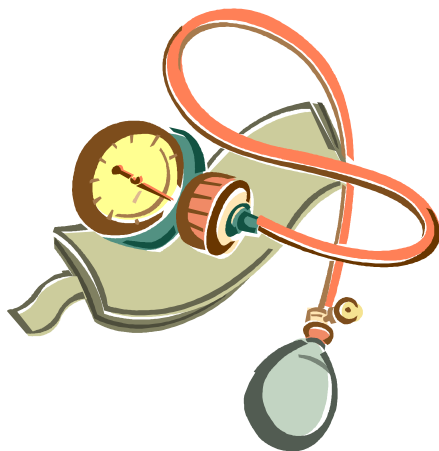
### What do the numbers mean?

Blood pressure is written as two numbers. The first (systolic) number represents the pressure when the heart beats. The second (diastolic) number represents the pressure when the heart rests between beats. The following is a classification system for blood pressure

<b>Normal blood pressure</b>	<i>systolic:</i> less than 120 mmHg and <i>diastolic:</i> less than 80 mmHg
<b>Prehypertension</b>	<i>systolic:</i> 120–139 mmHg or <i>diastolic:</i> 80–89 mmHg
<b>High blood pressure</b>	<i>systolic:</i> 140 mmHg or higher or <i>diastolic:</i> 90 mmHg or higher or taking antihypertensive medication

### Who Has High Blood Pressure

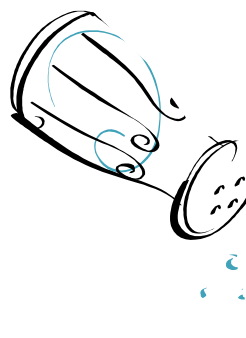
- Almost 90% of adults aged 45–64 years will develop high blood pressure during the remainder of their lifetime.
- About 25% of American adults aged 20 years or older have prehypertension.
- One of every three U.S. adults aged 20 years or older have hypertension.
- Nearly one of five people have hypertension and are not aware that they have it.
- In the United States, high blood pressure is more common among blacks than whites. About 44% of black women have high blood pressure.
- Mexican-Americans have the lowest level of hypertension control compared to non-Hispanic whites and blacks.



### Health Impact of High Blood Pressure

- High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure, and kidney disease.
- High blood pressure was a primary or contributing cause of death for 326,000 Americans in 2006.

Nearly 45 million people visited their doctor for high blood pressure in 2006.



### High Blood Pressure and Salt

A diet high in sodium (salt) increases the risk for higher blood pressure. About 77% of the sodium Americans consume comes from processed and restaurant foods.

### Preventing and Controlling High Blood Pressure

You can maintain healthy blood pressure through changing your lifestyle or by combining lifestyle changes with prescribed medications. Key lifestyle changes include the following:

- Have your blood pressure checked regularly.
- Maintain a normal body weight (body mass index of 18.5–24.9 which is kilograms divided by height in meters squared).
- Keep up physical activity (2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., brisk walking) every week and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).
- Follow a healthy eating plan of a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and low in sodium.
- Quit smoking.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation ( $\leq 2$  drinks per day for men and  $\leq 1$  drinks per day for women).
- If you have high blood pressure and are prescribed medication(s), take as directed.

### Resources for more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/index.htm#hbp](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/index.htm#hbp)