

Vital Signs - High Blood Pressure

On September 4, 2012, CDC released its 25th issue of Vital Signs, a monthly “call to action” concerning a single, important public health topic. This report focuses on the issue of blood pressure control.

In the United States, nearly one third of the adult population, or approximately 67 million people, have high blood pressure. Of those with high blood pressure, more than half don’t have it under control. High blood pressure makes you four times more likely to die from a stroke, and three times more likely to die from heart disease.

What is high blood pressure and how do we improve control? Normal blood pressure is where your systolic pressure, or the top number, is less than 120, and your diastolic pressure, or the bottom number, is less than 80. If you are below this level, keep up the good work.

If your pressure is 120 to 139 over 80 to 89, you should monitor it closely and make healthy lifestyle changes.

If you have a pressure of 140 over 90 or higher and you are not already being treated for high blood pressure, seek medical attention. If you *are* being treated, make sure to take your prescribed medicines.

Ask your health care provider to check your blood pressure during visits, or to check your own pressure, you can buy a blood pressure cuff. You can even get checked for free at many fire stations and pharmacies.

High blood pressure has few warning signs. Don’t wait until it’s too late to control your pressure. Get your blood pressure checked regularly. Remind your health care provider or your pharmacist to talk to you about your pressure and know the warning signs.

Be physically active; if you smoke, get help to quit; practice other good health behaviors; and take prescribed medicines as directed. High blood pressure *is* within your control.