

# Facts vs Fiction

## What You Don't Know About High Blood Pressure

**"I have had high blood pressure for years, there is nothing I can do to improve my readings."**

**FICTION!** Taking medication as prescribed is important to improve blood pressure readings. You should take your medication even if you feel well. Incorporating a heart-healthy diet and exercise can help you prevent heart attack or stroke. Losing weight can also help to improve your blood pressure.



**"I noticed that when I am stressed, my blood pressure is elevated."**

**FACT:** High levels of stress and decreased sleep can increase blood pressure. Improving sleep can be as easy as improving your sleep routine/sleep hygiene. If you are having problems with stress or sleep, contact your primary care provider to talk about treatment options.

**"High blood pressure is more common in older people."**

**FACT:** Yes, but younger people are at risk, too. High blood pressure is more common in older people because the arteries in our bodies harden and stiffen as we age. This causes resistance in our arteries, which causes high blood pressure.



**"I feel fine. I can stop taking my blood pressure medication."**

**FICTION!** High blood pressure is considered a lifelong disease. Most people do not have any symptoms unless their blood pressure is dangerously high. You should not stop taking your medication without first consulting your doctor.



For more information about blood pressure, scan this QR code with your smart phone.



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**“I stopped using table salt. I don't have to worry about my sodium.”**

**FICTION!** High amounts of sodium can be hidden in the prepared foods we eat. Even foods from the grocery store such as canned goods, soups, potato chips, pizza, salad dressings, and deli meats may have high amounts of sodium. It is important to read food labels to determine the amount of sodium in them. Items that have 400mg or more of sodium are considered high in sodium.



**“I have high blood pressure, so I am at risk for other chronic conditions.”**

**FACT:** Having high blood pressure puts you at risk the following conditions:

- ◆ heart disease
- ◆ heart attack
- ◆ stroke
- ◆ heart failure
- ◆ kidney disease
- ◆ vision loss
- ◆ sexual dysfunction
- ◆ atherosclerosis

**“My doctor checks my blood pressure, so I don't need to check it myself.”**

**FICTION!** Even though your doctor checks your blood pressure reading in the office, it is important to check your blood pressure regularly at home. Here are tips to ensure an accurate reading:

- ◆ Do not talk while measuring your blood pressure.
- ◆ Put both feet flat on the floor and uncross your legs.
- ◆ Avoid drinking or eating 30 minutes before.
- ◆ Use the bathroom before taking your reading.
- ◆ Make sure to calibrate your blood pressure cuff according to the package insert.
- ◆ Record your readings so you can discuss them with your doctor.

**Sources:** <https://cancertrials.keckmedicine.org/blog/10-blood-pressure-myths-and-facts/> and <https://www.cdc.gov/high-blood-pressure/data-research/facts-stats/index.html>



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