

Physical Activity and Your Blood Pressure

Having high blood pressure can lead to health problems, such as heart disease, stroke and kidney problems.

The good news is physical activity can help!

How much physical activity should I do?

It is important to be active most days of the week. *Aerobic activities* can help improve and manage your blood pressure.

Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing and swimming.

The following table describes your aerobic physical activity “prescription.”

Aerobic Physical Activity “Prescription”	
How often?	<p>Aim for 150 minutes of <i>aerobic activity</i> per week.</p> <p>This could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• shorter sessions: 10 minutes, 3 times/day• longer sessions: 30 or more minutes/day, 5 or more days/week
How hard?	<p>Try to work at a <i>moderate-to-vigorous</i> intensity.</p> <p>This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your heart beats faster• You are sweating lightly• Your breathing is deeper and faster• You can still talk easily, but not sing

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you some safe exercises that work best for you.

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase.

- **how long** you are active
- **how often** you are active
- **how hard** you work

How does physical activity affect my blood pressure?

While you are *doing* an aerobic activity, your blood pressure changes.

- The top number (called systolic) will rise when you are active. The harder you work, the higher this number can go.
- The bottom number (called diastolic) will stay about the same. In some people it may drop slightly. This is normal.

If your blood pressure is too high, your health care provider may

- ◆ tell you to monitor your blood pressure when you are active; or
- ◆ give you blood pressure ranges, so you can stay safe when active.

Your blood pressure will be lower *after* you have done an aerobic physical activity.

- This decrease in your blood pressure can last several hours. This is one of the reasons why daily physical activity is recommended; you get health benefits right away!
- Often, those with very high blood pressure will see the greatest change.
- You may see a larger decrease if your physical activity session is longer, or if you work harder

Blood Pressure changes OVER TIME

FUN FACT:

Most people who become regularly active can lower their systolic blood pressure by *seven points* and their diastolic pressure by *five points*.

Such as:

- Blood pressure before becoming active = 154 / 98
- Blood pressure after 4 months of being active = 147 / 93

The more often you are active, the sooner you may see these changes.