

# Know the Facts About Blood Pressure and Menopause

TAKE STEPS TO REDUCE RISKS



Many women experience increased blood pressure throughout and after the transition into menopause. Women can help protect their heart health and prevent disease by tracking their blood pressure, noting any changes, and discussing ways to maintain a healthy blood pressure with a health care provider.

## • Blood Pressure and the Phases of Menopause

• **Menopause** happens when a woman's periods stop and she can no longer get pregnant because her body is making less of certain hormones. It usually occurs between ages 45 and 55. Health care providers confirm menopause after a woman has not had a period, or any bleeding or spotting, for 12 months in a row.

• **Perimenopause or the Menopausal Transition** represents the time—usually a span of a few years—leading up to menopause. Perimenopause sometimes begins as early as age 40 and often comes with symptoms such as hot flashes and irregular periods.

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The years leading up to menopause bring many hormonal and physical changes, which can affect blood pressure. During this time, many women may experience high blood pressure (hypertension) or early signs of other [chronic diseases and health issues](#). Before menopause, about 17 percent of women have high blood pressure due to factors like age, race, diet, genetics, or lack of exercise. But by the time women are between 40 and 59 years old, nearly 50 percent have high blood pressure.

• **Postmenopause** is the time after menopause, when a woman hasn't experienced a period for over a year. Some women may still have menopausal symptoms for a few years after their last menstrual period. Women who are postmenopausal are more likely to have high blood pressure. About 75 percent of women aged 60 and older have high blood pressure, and this risk increases as they age.

### Perimenopausal factors that may impact blood pressure and heart health include:

- A slower metabolism which can result in weight gain.
- Greater impact of salt in the diet due to perimenopausal hormone changes
- Menopausal symptoms such as trouble sleeping, depression, anger, and irritability which can increase stress.
- Decreased levels of estrogen. Estrogen protects against heart disease so during the years leading up to menopause as [estrogen levels decrease](#), the risk of heart disease increases.
- Hormone replacement therapies. Some therapies for menopausal symptoms can result in increases in blood pressure.

## Blood Pressure Basics

**The Numbers:** Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 millimeters of mercury (mmHg). High blood pressure is 130/80 mmHg or higher.










**Lack of Symptoms:** High blood pressure is known as “the silent killer” because it often has no symptoms until it reaches more serious levels.

**Multiple Risks:** High blood pressure raises the risk of serious health issues such as stroke, dementia, kidney disease, heart disease, eye problems, and early death.

**Regular Monitoring:** Health care providers check patients' blood pressure during regular checkups. People can monitor their blood pressure more often at home and at some public places like drug stores, grocery stores, and pharmacies. Learn more about how to self-monitor blood pressure at home [here](#).

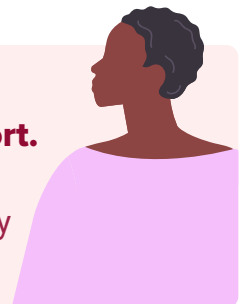
**Opportunity:** The years leading up to, throughout, and beyond menopause represent an important time for monitoring, preventing, and managing blood pressure and associated health conditions. Regardless of age and menstrual status, healthy habits and lifestyle changes can help improve your present and future health.

## Tips and Healthy Habits

-  **Talk to Your Health Care Provider:** Share your menopausal symptoms with your health care provider to get advice and discuss treatments and lifestyle changes that may work for you.
-  **My Menoplan:** The [My Menoplan](#) tool, funded by the National Institutes of Health, can help you track and learn more about your menopausal symptoms and risk factors. With this tool, you can create a personal plan and discuss it with your health care provider to manage symptoms and help keep your blood pressure under control.
-  **Meals and Snacks:** [Eat foods low in salt and high in potassium](#) (e.g., fruits and vegetables).
-  **Alcohol:** [Avoid or limit alcoholic beverages](#).
-  **Exercise:** Engage in regular physical activity as recommended by your health care provider, [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#), and the [Move Your Way campaign website](#).
-  **Weight:** [Aim for a healthy weight](#).
-  **Smoking:** [Avoid or quit smoking](#).
-  **Stress and Sleep:** [Manage stress](#) and ensure you get [good-quality sleep](#).
-  **Checkups:** Visit your health care provider for [routine checkups and screenings](#) and to make sure your [cholesterol](#) and [blood sugar](#) levels are in check.

### Keeping your blood pressure at a healthy level is worth the effort.

The steps you take can also help prevent disease and keep you healthy throughout midlife and beyond.



Learn more about [blood pressure](#) and [stroke prevention](#).

Learn more about [menopause](#).

Make the most of every health care visit with tips from the [“Your Health, Your Way” fact sheet](#).

Thank you for celebrating **National Women's Blood Pressure Awareness Week** with us!