



**Florida
Health Care
Plans**



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Taking Medication to Treat High Blood Pressure

Sometimes blood pressure stays too high even when a person makes these kinds of healthy changes. In that case, it is necessary to add medicine to help lower blood pressure. Medicines will control your blood pressure, but they cannot cure it. **You will need to take blood pressure medicine for a long time.**

Blood pressure medicines work in different ways to lower blood pressure. Often, two or more medicines work better than one. Some medicines lower blood pressure by removing extra fluid and salt from your body. Others affect blood pressure by slowing down the heartbeat or by relaxing and widening blood vessels.

Below are the types of medicine used to treat high blood pressure:

- Diuretics (di-u-RET-iks) are sometimes called water pills. They work by helping your kidneys flush excess water and salt from your body. This reduces the amount of fluid in your blood, and your blood pressure goes down. There are different types of diuretics. They are often used along with other high blood pressure medicines and may be combined with another medicine in one pill.
- Beta blockers help your heart beat slower and with less force. Your heart pumps less blood through the blood vessels, and your blood pressure goes down.
- Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors keep your body from making a hormone called angiotensin II, which normally causes blood vessels to narrow. ACE inhibitors prevent this narrowing, so your blood pressure goes down.
- Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) are newer blood pressure medicines that protect your blood vessels from angiotensin II. As a result, the blood vessels relax and become wider, and your blood pressure goes down.
- Calcium channel blockers (CCBs) keep calcium from entering the muscle cells of your heart and blood vessels. This causes blood vessels to relax, and your blood pressure goes down.
- Alpha blockers reduce nerve impulses that tighten blood vessels, allowing blood to pass more easily and causing blood pressure to go down.
- Alpha-beta blockers reduce nerve impulses to blood vessels the same way alpha blockers do, but they also slow the heartbeat, as beta blockers do. As a result, blood pressure goes down.
- Nervous system inhibitors relax blood vessels by controlling nerve impulses from the brain. This causes blood vessels to become wider and blood pressure to go down.
- Vasodilators (VA-so-di-LA-ters) open blood vessels by directly relaxing the muscle in the vessel walls, causing blood pressure to go down.

It is important that you take your blood pressure medicine at the same time each day and not skip days or cut pills in half to save money. For more information, call us at 386 / 676 – 7100 ext. 7788. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The hearing impaired may call TRS Relay 711.



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Questions to Ask Your Doctor If You Have High Blood Pressure

- What is my blood pressure reading in numbers?
- What is my goal blood pressure?
- Is my blood pressure under adequate control?
- Is my systolic pressure too high (over 140)?
- What would be a healthy weight for me?
- Is there a diet to help me lose weight (if I need to) and lower my blood pressure?
- Is there a recommended healthy eating plan I should follow to help lower my blood pressure (if I don't need to lose weight)?
- Is it safe for me to start doing regular physical activity?
- What is the name of my blood pressure medication?
- Is that the brand name or the generic name?
- What are the possible side effects of my medication? (Be sure the doctor knows about any allergies you have and any other medications you are taking, including over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and dietary supplements.)
- What time of day should I take my blood pressure medicine?
- Should I take it with food?
- Are there any foods, beverages, or dietary supplements I should avoid when taking this medicine?
- What should I do if I forget to take my blood pressure medicine at the recommended time? Should I take it as soon as I remember or should I wait until the next dosage is due?

Source: Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure, National Institutes of Health,
http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hbp_low/hbp_low.pdf