Blood Pressure and Your Kidneys

High blood pressure is the second most common cause of kidney disease. High blood pressure can also be a side effect of kidney disease.

Your blood pressure reads as two numbers. The top number is the systolic number. It's the pressure when the heart beats. The bottom, or diastolic, number is the pressure between beats. Normal blood pressure is 120/80 mm Hg.

The Blood Pressure—Kidney Damage Cycle

According to the National Institutes of Health, high blood pressure can damage blood vessels throughout your body. When the blood vessels in your kidneys get damaged, your kidneys lose their ability to clean your blood. Extra fluid builds up in your body. This extra fluid may then raise your blood pressure, continuing a cycle of damage.

Helpful Lifestyle Changes

- Maintain a healthy weight. Exercise 150 minutes a week.
- Eat a low-sodium diet and limit alcohol.
- Medicines like diuretics, ACEs, ARBs, beta-blockers, and calcium channel blockers may also help.

What’s a blood pressure screening? See page 2!

Healthy Heart Outlook

STAYING HEALTHY • LIVING WELL

SPRING 2011
Can Turning Off the TV Help You Live Longer?

According to a study in the journal *Circulation*, the more time you spend watching television, the greater your risk of dying from heart disease. The problem isn’t what you’re watching—it’s that you’re sitting down. Even people who exercise increase their chances of heart disease death if they watch more than two hours of TV a day.

Every hour of TV watching raised the risk for heart disease death by up to 18 percent. The risk in people who watched four or more hours of TV a day was 80 percent higher than in those who watched less than two hours. This stayed true even when researchers looked at diet, smoking habits, blood pressure, cholesterol level, waist size, and exercise. The study authors speculate that TV watching replaces activities that would otherwise get you up and moving around. And moving around versus watching TV would be healthier.

Good Health Guidelines

For people with heart disease, it’s important to make sure the following tests are kept current and to discuss these topics with your health care provider:

- Having a lipid profile done at least once a year
- Having your blood pressure checked at every office visit
- Screening for diabetes—your doctor may test you every three years if your blood sugar reading is in the normal range. Or you may need testing every year if it is above the normal range.
- Reviewing your medications

Talk with your health care provider about ways to:

- Eat a healthy diet
- Manage your weight
- Get regular exercise
- Get help to quit smoking

A Closer Look

Blood Pressure Screening

It’s a familiar part of a medical visit. A cuff is wrapped around your arm, inflated, and then released. Checking blood pressure is important because high blood pressure is common. And you can’t feel it. It develops quietly over time and may lead to heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure. Even if your blood pressure is healthy now, it can go up with age and weight gain. The American Heart Association recommends that everyone older than age 20 have their blood pressure checked at least every two years. If your blood pressure is high or you take medication for blood pressure, it should be checked at each doctor visit and at home as recommended by your doctor.

Although these are suggested guidelines for care, please check with your benefits plan for coverage.
1. **Stay Motivated.**
Take time to remember the many benefits of a healthy weight. Even a small weight loss helps control blood pressure and cholesterol, takes a load off your heart, and helps prevent diabetes. Plus, it boosts your energy level. Get support from family, friends, or a local or online weight management program, too. That support will inspire you to stick with your healthy new routines.

2. **Monitor Yourself.**
Keep an eye on your weight, diet, and physical activity. Get on the scale regularly. It’s recommended that you weigh yourself about once a week during active weight loss and then daily to help avoid weight regain for weight loss maintenance. Weigh yourself at the same time of day, such as in the morning after waking. If you find your weight is steadily moving upward—more than about 5 pounds—take action. First, figure out why you’ve regained the weight. Is it due to travel, a busy schedule, or too many restaurant meals? Have you been getting less exercise? Then make a plan to get back on track.

3. **Eat Healthy.**
Keep up with the healthy eating habits that helped you lose weight. Research has shown that people who successfully prevent weight regain continue to consume a lower-calorie diet and eat breakfast every day.

4. **Keep Moving.**
It can take 60 to 90 minutes of exercise a day to keep weight off. Fitting in that much activity takes planning and commitment. The CDC suggests breaking up your exercise throughout the day. For instance, you could walk for 20 minutes in the morning, walk again for 10 minutes at lunch, and work out with an exercise video in the evening.

Keeping the pounds off means paying attention and coping with obstacles. So keep your eye on the ball. With practice, you’ll soon be a pro.

When you have heart failure, your body may retain fluid. This can cause swelling in certain areas of the body, including the ankles, legs, and feet. But not getting enough fluid can lead to dehydration. To help maintain a healthy fluid balance, you should keep an eye out for sudden weight changes. This is a signal that you might be headed for trouble.

- Weigh yourself once each morning—after you urinate and before you eat.
- Contact your doctor if you gain or lose more than 2 pounds in one day or 4 pounds in one week.

Watch for Hidden Sodium
According to the National Institutes of Health, you should limit your salt intake. Too much sodium can contribute to fluid retention in people with heart failure. Here are some tips for cutting back on sodium:
- Read food labels to determine just how much sodium is in one serving. You may be surprised to find high sodium levels in unlikely places—such as milk products, canned foods, and frozen dinners.
- Substitute canned vegetables with fresh or frozen ones.
- If you do use canned vegetables or other foods, rinse them to get rid of some of the sodium.
- Remove the saltshaker from the kitchen counter or dinner table. Instead, use low-sodium seasonings, including herbs, lemon juice, or vinegar.
- Limit eating out at restaurants where many menu items are high in sodium. Instead, make more meals at home.

Watch What You Drink
Your doctor may recommend that you limit your fluid intake. The following strategies may help:
- Quench your thirst with sugarless hard candy or ice chips.
- The rule of thumb for people with heart failure is no alcohol. It decreases the heart’s ability to contract. But if you do drink, limit yourself to no more than one drink per day.
- To help you track your fluid intake, measure the capacity of your favorite cups and mugs. Just fill them up with water and then pour it into a measuring cup. Then, label them with the amount of fluid they hold. The few moments you spend doing this can pay off in the long run.
- Avoid beverages that contain caffeine, including...
coffee, black tea, and soft drinks. Caffeine can put stress on the heart. Decaffeinated beverages are OK, but fruit juice and water are even better alternatives.

Manage Your Medications
- Write out a list of all the medicines you take. Be sure to include all over-the-counter drugs, herbal supplements, vitamins, and prescription medicines. Review this list with your doctor. Some pain relievers and herbal supplements can interact with your heart medicines. And certain antacids contain salt, so you may need to avoid them.
- Your doctor can help you establish a schedule for taking your heart medicines. Certain drugs need to be taken hours apart. Others may cause you to go to the bathroom. Your doctor may advise you to take these earlier in the day so they won’t interrupt your sleep.

Stay Active
Exercise can lessen some of the symptoms of heart failure, including fatigue and shortness of breath. But exercise can often be a real challenge when you have this condition. Ask your doctor to help you plan a workout that’s safe.
- To help you stick to your exercise routine, ask friends and family to join you.
- Add a little variety to your workout. Swim one day and walk the next day.
- Avoid performing exercises that cause strain or require short bursts of energy.
- Stop exercising if you have shortness of breath, dizziness, light-headedness, or chest pain.

In a recent report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the rate of type 2 diabetes in the United States will double or triple by the year 2050. About one in 10 adults has diabetes today, but in 40 years, diabetes may affect one in every three adults. Diabetes is a big concern when it comes to heart health. Men with diabetes have twice as many heart attacks and strokes as those without the disease, while women with diabetes have four times as many heart attacks as women without diabetes. What can you do? Don’t let diabetes get a foot in the door.

Take steps to prevent blood glucose problems. These healthy habits do double duty, protecting against both heart problems and diabetes:
- **Eat more fiber.** Fiber helps lower cholesterol. And it can help keep blood glucose more normal. So eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans.
- **Ditch the car.** Walking is good for your blood pressure, weight, and blood glucose. Do your errands on foot. Take a walk break instead of a coffee break. Stroll around the block after dinner. Just 30 minutes of walking a day makes a difference.
- **Trim your belly.** Tummy fat raises the risk for both heart disease and diabetes. If you’re overweight, losing just 5 to 10 percent of your current weight will bring benefits (that’s 9 to 18 pounds for someone weighing 180 pounds).

Heart disease and diabetes are a serious double whammy. Taking action now can protect your health.
**Blood clots.** They repair cuts or breaks in the blood vessels and help stop bleeding. But they can be dangerous if they block blood flow to certain areas for too long. Blood clots in the brain can cause strokes; clots in coronary arteries can cause heart attacks.

**Beta-glucan.** A type of fiber found in barley and oats. Beta-glucan helps lower total blood cholesterol, including levels of LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol.

**Calcium channel blockers.** Medications used to treat high blood pressure. Calcium channel blockers help the blood vessels relax and pressure go down by keeping calcium from entering the muscle cells of the heart and blood vessels.

**Manganese.** A mineral that is an essential nutrient, meaning the body needs it to function. Manganese can be found in leafy vegetables, nuts, and whole grains.

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**Q&A: Common Questions About Ministrokes**

Sometimes called a ministroke, a transient ischemic attack (TIA) is nothing to ignore. Often TIAs and strokes occur when the flow of blood to the brain is blocked.

**Q: What Sets the Stage for a TIA?**

A: As you get older, the large blood vessels in your body called arteries can get damaged. Having high blood pressure or cholesterol levels, or being a smoker, may also cause injury to your arteries. This damage can cause a sticky substance called plaque to build up in the injured area. The artery then gets narrower and becomes blocked with plaque. The result? A blood clot can get stuck and cut off blood flow. If this blockage occurs in the brain, it causes a TIA or stroke.

**Q: What’s the Difference Between a TIA and Stroke?**

A: A TIA is a blockage that comes and goes quickly, leaving no lasting damage. It usually lasts for just a few minutes. But this ministroke is a warning sign. About one-third of people who have a TIA go on to have a full-fledged stroke within a year.

A stroke is a blockage that causes long-term brain damage. A person may have difficulty speaking, swallowing, or moving an arm or leg. Many people eventually recover, but sometimes the damage is permanent.

**Q: What Are the Symptoms of a TIA?**

A: Symptoms of a TIA and stroke are the same. According to the American Stroke Association, they come on suddenly and include:

- Weakness or numbness on one side of the body
- Trouble speaking or understanding others
- Loss of vision
- Confusion
- Severe headache with no known cause
- Dizziness or loss of balance

**What Should I Do?**

If you think you are having a TIA or stroke, dial 911 or your local emergency number right away. If it is a stroke, quick hospital treatment can prevent brain damage. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have had symptoms of a TIA. The right medicines can prevent a future stroke.
Barley Pilaf

Serves 4

This is a lovely side dish for grilled chicken or fish.

Ingredients

1 tbsp. olive oil
1 cup chopped onion
1 cup sun-dried tomatoes cut into strips (If you use tomatoes that come in oil, add them first to the pan and omit the tablespoon of olive oil.)
4 cups baby spinach
¼ cup slivered almonds
2 cups cooked barley
2 tbsp. parsley

Directions

2. When spinach is wilted and barley is hot, sprinkle with parsley. Serve immediately.

Each serving provides
Calories 219, Total fat 8 g, Cholesterol 0 g, Sodium 102 mg, Carbohydrate 35 g, Fiber 7 g, Protein 6 g

Barley Benefits

According to the American Dietetic Association, barley—like other whole grains—is an excellent source of vitamins and minerals. And barley offers something special. It’s especially good for the heart, thanks to beta-glucan, a fiber that helps lower blood cholesterol.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends that half of your grain servings be whole grains, and a serving of sweet, chewy barley will help get you there. A ½ cup portion of cooked barley contains 97 calories, 3 grams of fiber, and the minerals iron, magnesium, potassium, zinc, copper, and manganese.

Adding Barley to Your Meals

Like rice, barley can be cooked in water or broth and used in a variety of dishes. Here are some ideas:

- Add barley to homemade soups and stews.
- Try a barley and bean stuffing in baked green peppers or zucchini.
- Mix chilled, cooked barley with colorful chopped vegetables, and top with a sprinkle of cheese and low-fat Italian salad dressing for a filling salad.
- Use leftover cooked barley in meatloaf and casseroles.
- Make a savory whole-grain pilaf with barley, wild rice, brown rice, broth, and spices.
- Heat leftover barley with milk, cinnamon, and raisins for a hearty breakfast cereal.
- Chill or freeze leftover barley, then reheat it for an easy side dish.
Health or wellness or prevention information