

## Blood Pressure: How High Is Too High?!

- In persons older than 50 years, systolic blood pressure greater than 140 mmHg is a much more important cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factor than diastolic blood pressure.
- The risk of cardiovascular disease beginning at 115/75 mmHg doubles with each increment of 20/10 mmHg; individuals who are normotensive at age 55 have a 90 percent lifetime risk for developing hypertension.

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbp/>

### Categories for Blood Pressure Levels in Adults (measured in millimeters of mercury, or mmHg)

Category	Systolic (top number)		Diastolic (bottom number)
Normal	Less than 120	And	Less than 80
Prehypertension	120–139	Or	80–89
<b>High blood pressure</b>			
Stage 1	140–159	Or	90–99
Stage 2	160 or higher	Or	100 or higher

JNC 7 - National Institutes of Health, <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/hypertension/express.pdf>

## The Magic Numbers: 180 / 110

### Hypertensive Urgency

Hypertensive *urgency* is a situation where the blood pressure is severely elevated [**180 or higher for your systolic pressure (top number) or 110 or higher for your diastolic pressure (bottom number)**], but there is no associated organ damage. You may or may not experience one or more of these symptoms:

- Severe headache
- Shortness of breath
- Nosebleeds
- Severe anxiety

Treatment generally requires readjustment of medications, but most often does not necessitate hospitalization for rapid blood pressure reduction. A blood pressure reading of 180/110 or greater requires immediate evaluation, because early evaluation of organ function and blood pressure elevations is critical for appropriate management.

### Hypertensive Emergency

If you get a **blood pressure reading of 180 or higher on top or 110 or higher on the bottom**, and are having any symptoms of possible organ damage (**chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness/weakness, change in vision, difficulty speaking**) do not wait to see if your pressure comes down on its own.

### Seek emergency medical assistance immediately.

If you can't access the emergency medical services (EMS), have someone drive you to the hospital right away.

American Heart Association,  
[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Hypertensive-Crisis\\_UCM\\_301782\\_Article.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Hypertensive-Crisis_UCM_301782_Article.jsp)

Date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Your Blood Pressure Reading: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_