Understanding Your Blood Pressure Reading

What Do the Numbers Mean?
Blood pressure is usually recorded as two numbers, such as 130/70.

- **Systolic**—top number, is the pressure inside the arteries when the heart beats or contracts
- **Diastolic**—bottom number, is the pressure inside the arteries in between beats, when the heart rests

What Is Considered a Healthy Blood Pressure Reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood Pressure Category</th>
<th>Systolic mm Hg (upper #)</th>
<th>Diastolic mm Hg (lower #)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Less than 120</td>
<td>Less than 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevated</td>
<td>120 – 129</td>
<td>Less than 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1</td>
<td>130 – 139</td>
<td>80 – 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2</td>
<td>140 or higher</td>
<td>90 or higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertensive Crisis (Consult your doctor immediately)</td>
<td>Higher than 180</td>
<td>and/or Higher than 120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Is High Blood Pressure Diagnosed?
A single high blood pressure reading does not necessarily mean you have high blood pressure. Your Primary Care Provider will want to get more than one measurement over a period of time. If it remains higher than normal, treatment may be recommended. Even if you feel fine and have no symptoms, high blood pressure can damage your heart and blood vessels, increasing your risk for stroke, heart and kidney disease, and other serious conditions.

What Can I Do to Improve My Blood Pressure or Maintain a Normal Level?
Living a healthy lifestyle is the most important thing you can do:

- Don’t smoke
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get moderate exercise for 30 minutes most days of the week—walking is one of the best!
- Eat a low-salt diet with lots of fruits and vegetables
- If you are on blood pressure medication, take it exactly as your Primary Care Provider recommends

Wespath Benefits and Investments is providing this information as an educational service and to illustrate some practices that may have a positive impact on health. It should not be construed as, does not constitute, and should not be relied upon as professional medical advice. Please consult your Primary Care Provider for recommendations appropriate for you.
Eating Foods from Each Food Group Can Increase Your Energy Levels and Improve Your Well-Being

Antioxidants
Foods like berries, grains, salmon and green vegetables are rich in antioxidants which can help lower your blood pressure.

Have You Heard the Expression “Eat the Rainbow”?
Eating foods with a variety of natural colors increases the range of vitamins and minerals in your diet, another influence on healthy blood pressure levels.

Source: WebMD

Construct Your Healthy Plate Using these Guidelines
• Half your plate = fruits and veggies
• One quarter of your plate = whole grains
• One quarter of your plate = protein, like chicken or fish

Focus on variety, portion size, and nutrition. Drink milk or water as your beverage of choice.

Success Tips for You and Your Congregation
• Let those around you know you are taking steps to eat healthier and invite them to join you.
• Encourage healthy options at pot lucks and meetings.
• Put healthy options towards the beginning of the buffet.
• Incorporate physical activity whenever possible.

See information on understanding your blood pressure on the next page.