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# New High Blood Pressure Guidelines: What Does it Mean for You?

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After 14 years, the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association have created [new definitions](#) for diagnosing high blood pressure, reducing the level to now include nearly half of Americans with hypertension.

Hypertension or high blood pressure is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke – the two leading causes of death in the **world**.

According to the authors the new guidelines are intended to help people make the necessary changes earlier in life to prevent the development of heart disease.

The change has dramatically increased the percentage of American adults identified with high blood pressure for 36% to 46%, nearly half of the U.S adult population.

## **Motivation behind the change**

The new guidelines have lead many people to wonder the motivation behind the change and question who will benefit more, big pharmaceutical companies or the 100 million Americans being newly diagnosed.

The guidelines, that have been in the works for about 3 years, were based on almost a thousand research studies and clinical trials all considered to be of the highest standard.

Of the 21 guideline writers, none claim to have a commercial interest with the pharma industry.

According to Kenneth Jamerson, M.D., Ph.D., one of the 21 experts on the guideline writing committee, although doctors will be labeling more people with hypertension and giving more medications, the new guidelines will save lives and money by preventing more strokes, cardiovascular events and kidney failure.

The doctors on the committee have also emphasized that the number of individuals who will need medications based on these new guidelines is only about 2%.

Instead, the report emphasizes the importance of lifestyle changes as the first step in treating hypertension.

Treatment will depend on stage of risk. Medications for high blood pressure may be necessary initially, however focusing on lifestyle

changes will be the driving force for reducing BP level and eliminating the need for future medication use.

### ***Hypertension is reversible.***

#### **Lifestyle Changes to Reduce Hypertension**

Fortunately there are things you can do, starting today, to lower blood pressure. Diets high in plant based foods, such as the D.A.S.H diet and Mediterranean diet, have shown to positively reduce the risk of disease, including hypertension.

#### **5 Lifestyle Changes to Reduce Hypertension**

1. **Reduce Sodium Intake** – Sodium, or salt, has a direct link in elevating blood pressure. Many people are aware of the health consequences of sodium and have actively eliminated adding salt to meals. However, salt is a nutrient that disguises itself in many packaged or pre-prepared foods. Reading nutrition labels and asking how your meal is prepared while dining out are important tools to utilize. The average american adult should limit their sodium intake to no more than 1,500mg per day. Click [here](#) for more sodium recommendations from the American Heart Association.
2. **Increase Potassium Foods** – Fruits and vegetables are high in potassium, a nutrient that works inversely to sodium. Higher intakes of potassium leads to lower sodium levels in the body, helping to reduce blood pressure. Plant based foods should take priority at every meal. Filling half of every plate with fruits and/or vegetables is a great way to reach the recommended 5-7 daily servings of fruits and vegetables.
3. **Achieve healthy body weight** – If you are overweight, make healthy weight loss a priority by increasing fruit and vegetable intake, reducing saturated fats, and increasing physical activity levels. Seek weight loss counseling with a registered dietitian if weight loss has been a struggle.
4. **Reduce Alcohol Consumption** – Alcohol should be consumed in moderation, one 8oz glass for women and two 8oz glasses for men. Although red wines have been shown to have heart healthy benefits, it is not necessary to consume a glass on a daily basis.
5. **Physical Activity** – Regular physical activity (150 minutes per week) is recommended in maintaining cardiovascular health. The goal is to elevate heart rate to a level where you can still carry a conversation while exercising. Cardio exercise, such as walking, running or swimming, elevates heart rate to stimulate healthy fresh blood flow through the body.

Check out more in [this infographic](#) on sodium and processed food from the American Heart Association.

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