

# Let's Talk about: Hypertension



ST. PAUL'S HOSPITAL  
COMMUNITY FORUMS

## What is Hypertension?

Blood pressure is the force that pushes blood through the blood vessels.

Blood pressure is usually classified based on the systolic and diastolic blood pressures and is described with two numbers (e.g. 120/80 mmHg). The first number is the systolic blood pressure which is the blood pressure in vessels during a heart beat. The second number is the diastolic blood pressure and it is the pressure between heartbeats.

**Hypertension (HTN) or high blood pressure** is a chronic medical condition in which the systemic arterial blood pressure is elevated.

## Hypertension by the Numbers:

Hypertension affects one in five Canadians and approximately 95% of Canadians will develop hypertension if they live an average lifespan. Over 90% of hypertensive Canadians have other cardiovascular risks.

It is the number one risk factor for stroke, a major risk factor for heart disease and is a leading cause of chronic kidney failure, so it is very important that it is properly controlled.

### Normal blood pressure:

Less than 120/80 mmHg

### Prehypertension:

120-139/80-89 mmHg

### Hypertension:

Greater than 140/90 mmHg

### Stage 1 Hypertension:

140-159/90-99 mmHg

### Stage 2 Hypertension:

160 or greater/ 100 or greater mmHg

## Causes

High blood pressure is often called a "silent killer" because it has no warning signs or symptoms. You can't see it. You can't feel it. But the good news is that you can control it.

Anyone can develop hypertension, but it becomes more common as you get older. Hypertension is classified as either primary (essential) or secondary. About 90–95% of cases are termed "primary hypertension", which refers to high blood pressure for which no medical cause can be found. The remaining 5–10% of cases (Secondary Hypertension) are caused by other conditions that affect the kidneys, arteries, heart, or endocrine system.

## How High Blood Pressure Causes Heart Disease and Stroke

Over time high blood pressure can damage blood vessel walls, causing scarring that promotes the build-up of fatty plaque. This build-up can narrow and eventually block arteries. It also strains the heart and eventually weakens it. Very high blood pressure can cause blood vessels in the brain to burst resulting in a stroke.

Source:

*The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada,*  
[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)  
*Hypertension Canada*  
[www.hypertension.ca](http://www.hypertension.ca)

Join medical experts from Providence Health Care for monthly community forums at St. Paul's Hospital. Each month features a different health topic with time to pose questions to the experts.

The forums are free and take place the third Wednesday of every month.

7:00 – 9:00 pm  
(doors open at 6:30)  
New Lecture Theatre  
St. Paul's Hospital  
1081 Burrard Street

For more information and to register, please email [ownyourhealth@providencehealth.bc.ca](mailto:ownyourhealth@providencehealth.bc.ca) or call 604-806-8495.

This evening's presentation will be available to view on our website:

[www.phcmedicine.ca](http://www.phcmedicine.ca)

Sponsored by:





# Treatment and Research at St. Paul's Hospital

A unique provincial resource, Providence Health Care provides complete care for British Columbians with Hypertension.

Just as important as the high-quality care we provide is our teaching and research mandate that helps us better understand this condition, improve patient care and develop new treatment solutions.

## Treatment

Treating high blood pressure involves lifestyle changes and possibly drug therapy.

With proper diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure, you can cut your risk of stroke by up to 40% and heart attack by up to 25%.

## Here are some tips to get your blood pressure in check:

1. Have your blood pressure checked regularly. High blood pressure often has no symptoms, so have yours checked by a healthcare professional at least once every two years or more often as your doctor suggested.
2. If you have been told you have high-normal blood pressure, Canadian guidelines recommend that you have your blood pressure checked at least once a year. High normal ranges between 130/85 mm Hg and 139/89 mm Hg.
3. If your doctor has prescribed medication, take it as directed.
4. Eat a balanced diet, reduce your salt and alcohol intake, be physically active and smoke-free to help lower

your blood pressure. Learn more about healthy lifestyle changes and the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan to lower high blood pressure.

5. Achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Even a modest reduction in weight, as little as 10%, can dramatically decrease your chances of having a stroke or heart attack.
6. Set aside some time every day to relax. Stress can cause blood pressure to rise in the short-term.
7. Limit your alcohol intake to 1 to 2 drinks per day to a weekly maximum of 9 for women and 14 for men. If your blood pressure is high, talk to your doctor about how to reduce your alcohol consumption.
8. Talk to your doctor about home blood pressure monitoring.

## Reducing salt intake would eliminate hypertension in one million Canadians

According to a study released in May 2007 by the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Stroke Network, and published in the May 2007 issue of Canadian Journal of Cardiology, cutting the average Canadians salt intake by half would eliminate hypertension in one million Canadians, double the number of Canadians with adequately controlled hypertension, and save the health-care system \$430 million a year.

Source:

*The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada,*  
[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)  
*Hypertension Canada*  
[www.hypertension.ca](http://www.hypertension.ca)

St. Paul's Hospital is an acute care, teaching and research hospital located in downtown Vancouver. It is home to many world-class medical and surgical programs, including heart and lung services, HIV/AIDS and kidney care.

St. Paul's serves both the local community and patients from across BC and the Yukon. St. Paul's is one of 14 health care facilities in Vancouver operated by Providence Health Care, one of Canada's largest faith-based health care organizations. Providence's 1,000 physicians and 6,000 staff deliver compassionate care to patients and residents in British Columbia while training medical professionals and making innovative advances in research.

**To support programs like this at St. Paul's Hospital, please visit [www.helpstpauls.com](http://www.helpstpauls.com) to make a donation to the Department of Medicine Academic Fund.**

[www.phcmedicine.ca](http://www.phcmedicine.ca)