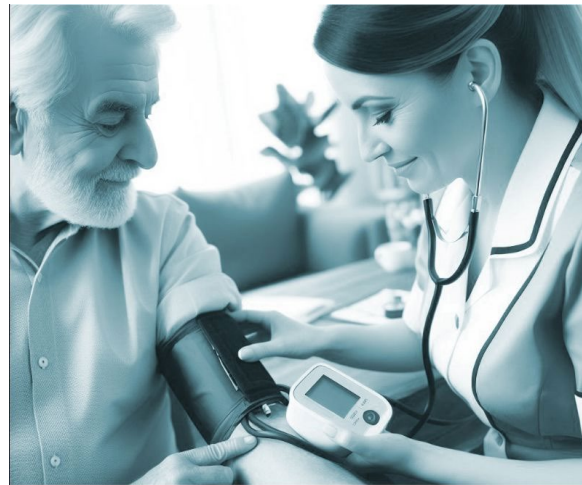




High Blood Pressure and Seniors

High blood pressure or **hypertension** is a common health problem in the United States, affecting almost half of all adults (48.1% in 2021). The problem is even more common among seniors and is projected to affect **70% of adults over the age of sixty-five**.

Many people affected by hypertension may not even be aware they have it. The body's network of blood vessels changes as you age. Your arteries stiffen with time, causing your blood pressure to rise, even if you have heart-healthy lifestyle habits. High blood pressure is called "the silent killer," because it often doesn't result in signs of illness that you can easily see or feel.



WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE and WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. Systolic blood pressure is the force caused by your heart contracting and pushing out blood. Diastolic blood pressure is the pressure when your heart relaxes and fills with blood. A blood pressure reading is given as the systolic blood pressure number over the diastolic blood pressure number.

- **Normal blood pressure** for most adults is defined as a systolic pressure of less than 120 and a diastolic pressure of less than 80.
- **High blood pressure** is defined as systolic pressure of 130 or higher, or a diastolic pressure of 80 or higher.

There is some debate about what the recommended blood pressure target reading for senior adults is. The threshold used to be up to 150/80 however, the revised American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association (ACC/AHA) guidelines from 2017 recommended a BP target of less than 130/80 mmHg for adults aged 65 years or older.

Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day, but it can **damage your heart and cause health problems if it stays high for a long time**. High blood pressure can make your heart work too hard and lose strength. The elevated force of blood flow can damage your blood vessels, making them weak, stiff, or cause them to narrow.

Over time, hypertension can harm organs including your heart, kidneys, brain, and eyes. Prolonged elevated pressure is associated with an increased incidence of cardiovascular disease (e.g., stroke, dissecting aneurysm, and heart attack) and renal failure.

The good news is that for most people **blood pressure can be managed**. You can often lower your blood pressure by improving your daily health habits and by taking medication if needed. Treatment requires ongoing evaluation and discussions with your doctor, especially if you have other medical conditions such as diabetes.

In addition to recommending lifestyle changes, your doctor will likely prescribe medication to lower your blood pressure to a safe level. Medication can control

your blood pressure, but it can't cure it. Consequently, if your doctor starts you on medication for high blood pressure, you may need to take it long term.



Unfortunately, only about half of the people with high blood pressure have it under control. **Medication noncompliance** is one of the main reasons that folks don't manage hypertension, and one in four people don't even refill their prescriptions. **For seniors, failure to manage medications and the resulting decline in health is a common reason they are forced to move into assisted living facilities.** Consistent medication adherence is critical for seniors to stay healthy at home.

Ho'okele Home Care can help seniors looking to manage their medications. A **Vivia Assistant** can be scheduled for a short visit every day to assist with medication reminders and vital signs. Call us at **888-484-2250** or [send us an email](#) to learn about our medication reminder services.

LIFESTYLE TARGETS TO HELP REDUCE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE:

- **Eat a heart-healthy diet.**
- **Aim for a healthy weight.**
- **Exercise.** Check with your doctor before starting an exercise plan.
- **Do not smoke.**
- **Cut down on salt.**

- **Drink less alcohol.** For those who drink, men should have no more than two drinks a day and women no more than one a day to lower their risk of high blood pressure.
- **Get a good night's sleep.** If you have been told you snore or sound like you stop breathing when you sleep, this may be a sign of Sleep Apnea. Treating sleep apnea can help to lower blood pressure.
- **Manage your stress.**



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