One in three adults in the U.S. has high blood pressure, but many don’t know it. That’s because high blood pressure usually doesn’t cause any noticeable symptoms. In fact, many people aren’t aware of their condition until problems develop. The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have it checked.

### What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. High blood pressure (hypertension) means the heart is pumping harder to move blood through the body. Blood pressure changes throughout the day. It’s lower when you’re resting or relaxed, and rises when you’re nervous, excited, stressed, or active. But if your blood pressure stays high most of the time, it can lead to serious health problems such as heart disease, heart attack, stroke, blindness, or kidney disease.

### HMSA Well-Being Connect

Take an active role in your well-being with HMSA Well-Being Connect, a powerful website that helps you develop a personalized plan to:

- Exercise regularly.
- Eat healthier.
- Manage stress.
- Stay on top of your health conditions.
- Track your progress.
- Connect with others.

To get started, take the Healthways Well-Being Assessment. Just log in to your HMSA My Account at hmsa.com and click on HMSA Well-Being Connect. HMSA members can use HMSA Well-Being Connect at no cost.

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How to lower your blood pressure

Work with your doctor to determine the best blood pressure and treatment for you. Together, you can set goals to improve your blood pressure.

A healthy lifestyle is important to managing your blood pressure. A healthy lifestyle, which affects your physical and mental well-being, includes:

- Staying physically active.
- Eating a healthy diet.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Being tobacco-free.
- Limiting alcohol.
- Managing stress.
- Having regular medical checkups with blood pressure checks.

Exercise regularly

Exercise makes your muscles and heart stronger. It helps manage risk factors for heart disease such as high cholesterol, excess weight, stress, and high blood pressure.

Before you begin an exercise program, check with your doctor to determine what type of exercise and how much of it is safe for you.

- Choose activities that are fun.
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothes.
- Exercise with a friend for support.
- Be active for 30 minutes or more at least five days a week.

Eat a healthy diet

Managing your blood pressure with nutritious foods is important. A heart-healthy diet is:

- Lower in sodium.
- Nutritious and balanced, and includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy.
- Low in unhealthy fats (such as saturated and trans fats).

Get the most from medications

Medications can help control high blood pressure, prevent complications, and reduce the risk of heart disease. To be effective, they must be taken exactly as prescribed. Make sure you know:

- The names of your medications.
- The dosages.
- How often to take them.
- The possible side effects.
- If the medication may interact with other drugs you take or with certain foods or beverages.
- What to do if you miss a dose.

To help you remember to take your medications, you could:

- Keep them all in one place where you’ll always see them, such as next to your toothbrush.
- Buy and use an inexpensive pill sorter from the drugstore.
- Write reminder notes to yourself.
- Mark it on a calendar each time you take your medications.