



Catholic Healthcare West

### Ask the Expert

**Q: During my annual physical, my doctor told me my blood pressure was high. Besides taking medication, what can I do to lower my blood pressure?**

**A:** According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), one out of three adults in the United States has high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. It's important to control your blood pressure because people with high blood pressure are at an increased risk for a heart attack or stroke.

Blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the artery walls. A normal blood pressure is less than 120 systolic and 80 diastolic, or 120 over 80. A blood pressure reading of 140 over 90 or greater is considered high blood pressure.

The CDC provides several steps you can take to lower your blood pressure, including:

- Eat healthy. Be sure to eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid salt. People should consume less than 1,500 milligrams of salt each day.
- Lose weight. Maintaining a healthy weight can help lower your blood pressure.
- Move your body. Make time to exercise for at least 30 minutes every day.
- Quit smoking.
- Drink alcohol in moderation. This means no more than one drink a day for women and no more than two drinks a day for men.

You may also want to try meditating. Studies show that by controlling your stress you can reduce your risk of heart disease. If you are unable to lower your blood pressure by taking these steps alone, your doctor will prescribe medication to help get – and keep – your blood pressure under control.



*Dorothy McClure, R.N., is the cardiac clinician for Catholic Healthcare West's HeartAware™ program. To learn more about HeartAware™, or to arrange for a free, in-person consultation, please visit [heartawaretest.com](http://heartawaretest.com) or call 480.728.3639.*