



## What is Blood Pressure?

The arteries in your body carry blood from your heart to all parts of your body. When your heart beats, it pumps out blood into your arteries. Blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries.

Your blood pressure is highest when your heart beats, pumping blood. This is the top number of your blood pressure reading. It is called your **systolic** (sis-tä-lik) blood pressure.

When your heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is the bottom number of your blood pressure reading. It is called your **diastolic** (dI-uh-stä-lik) blood pressure.

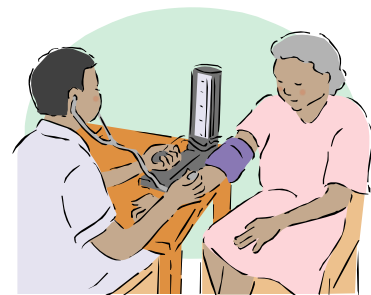
When your doctor or other health care provider talks about your blood pressure, they talk about these two numbers. Both numbers are important.

When the two measurements are written down, the systolic pressure is the first or top number, and the diastolic pressure is the second or bottom number. If your blood pressure is 120/80, you say it is “120 over 80.”

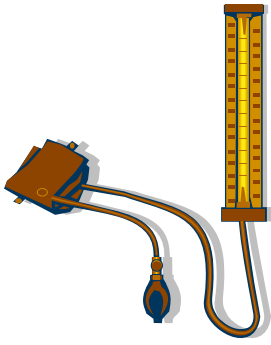
### **Taking Your Blood Pressure**

While you are awake, your blood pressure stays pretty much the same as long as you are sitting or standing still.

Your doctor or health care provider should measure your blood pressure while you are sitting in a chair with both feet on the floor.



To be as healthy as you can be, your systolic blood pressure should be lower than 120, and your diastolic lower than 80.



### **Why should I care about blood pressure?**

When your blood pressure is too high, it makes your heart and arteries work harder. It also raises your chances of having a stroke, a heart attack, and kidney problems.

When your blood pressure is too low, your brain, heart, and kidneys do not get enough oxygen. Over time, they can become permanently damaged.

### **What is high blood pressure?**

When someone has high blood pressure it means their systolic blood pressure is 140 or higher or their diastolic blood pressure is 90 or higher.

If you think you have high blood pressure, you should see a doctor to talk about ways to keep your blood pressure under control.

### **What is low blood pressure?**

Most people worry about their blood pressure being too high. Sometimes it can get too low. Low blood pressure usually means it is 90/60 or lower.

Some people have low blood pressure all the time, and it is not a problem. Low blood pressure may be a problem if it makes you feel dizzy or faint.

If you think your low blood pressure is a problem, you should see a doctor to talk about ways to treat your low blood pressure.

### **How can I keep my blood pressure normal?**

For many people, making changes in the way they eat and becoming more active is all it takes to keep their blood pressure under control. Your WISEWOMAN lifestyle counselor can help you understand the healthy choices that will keep your blood pressure normal.

Some people may also need to take medicine for their blood pressure. A doctor can help you decide what is best for you. If you cannot pay for your blood pressure medicine, there are programs that may help you pay for your medicine. Talk to your lifestyle counselor or your doctor to see if you qualify. Remember, the medicine only works if you take it the way you are supposed to take it.

