

# OFP Patient Education Handout

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## New High Blood Pressure Treatment Guidelines



High Blood Pressure is a common medical condition. If it is not checked or treated, it can damage body organs such as the brain, heart, and kidneys. A number of problems such as heart disease and stroke are caused by high blood pressure. Blood pressure is measured by taking the systolic pressure (the upper number) followed by the diastolic pressure (the lower number). High blood pressure occurs when either of these numbers is too high which can happen with no symptoms. Signs and symptoms in instances of severe High Blood Pressure may include headache, feeling weak and tired, dizzy or light headed, chest pain or tightness, fast heart rate, visual or hearing problems, and shortness of breath.

## Recommendations in the New Treatment Guidelines Include:

New US guidelines for the treatment of high blood pressure were released in 2013. The guidelines address when and which drugs should be used to treat high blood pressure in patients. The guidelines also state the need to follow a healthy lifestyle along with taking medications to help prevent the problems of high blood pressure as mentioned above. Among the recommendations:

1. In patients aged 60 years or over, drugs should be started when systolic blood pressure is 150 mm Hg or higher or diastolic blood pressure is 90 mm Hg or higher.
2. In patients under 60 years of age, medicine should be started when systolic blood pressure is 140 mm Hg or higher or diastolic blood pressure is 90 mm Hg or higher.
3. If the blood pressure goal is not reached within 1 month of starting treatment, the dose of the first drug should be increased or another drug should be added.

## Healthy Lifestyle Changes Include:

Eat a healthy diet (a low salt and fat diet with fruits and vegetables.) Exercise regularly. If you are overweight or obese (defined by a Body Mass index (BMI) of 25 or higher), this can increase your risk of high blood pressure. Lose some weight. If you smoke, please stop! Limit alcohol use. Reduce your stress. Stress can make your heart beat faster and your blood vessels contract which may be harmful over time.

## Medical Care and Treatment Options:

If you have any questions about your blood pressure please contact your osteopathic family physician. High blood pressure can be lowered with the right treatment plan and regular visits with your doctor. Your family doctor will help you choose which drugs and treatments will work best for you. In case of any emergency, you should call your doctor or 911 right away.



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**Source(s): American Heart Association, Medscape, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and Prescriber's Letter.**

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