

# Controlling High Blood Pressure: Get In Control

If diagnosed with high blood pressure, there are different types of medications that doctors can prescribe to help control the problem.

*"One of the most common is a class of drugs we call diuretics and what they really do is get rid of the excess salt in the diet. And they're often very commonly used, they're highly effective and they're very affordable."* – Elizabeth Ross, MD, Private Practice Physician

Often patients will need to take more than one blood pressure medicine to effectively lower blood pressure.

Angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors, called ACE inhibitors, help relax blood vessels which helps lower blood pressure.

Calcium channel blockers keep calcium from entering muscle cells of the heart and blood vessels, which also relaxes the vessels.

Beta-blockers can be used to reduce nerve impulses to blood vessels. They also slow a patient's heartbeat.

And, Vasodilators can be used to open blood vessels by relaxing muscles in vessel walls.

Since many people with high blood pressure also have other conditions like high cholesterol or diabetes, they may take several medications every day.

*"For some people who have high blood pressure they may need to take two or three medications. It's very important to continue taking your blood pressure medications, because for most people blood pressure medications will be needed for a long time."* Lawrence Fine, MD, Chief, Clinical Applications and Prevention Branch, National Heart, Lung, Blood Institute

Some medications, when combined with others, can interact in a negative way.

It's important that patients, who take high blood pressure medicines, provide their doctor a list of all their medications, including vitamin supplements and herbal remedies, and to keep that list up to date.

While the medicines to help lower blood pressure are generally very effective, the experts say medications alone are not the answer.

*"The American Heart Association has a huge new campaign. Our 2020 goal is to improve the health of all Americans by 20%. We need to change behaviors and we need to get through to the community, the family to*

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*get into the environment as much as possible with campaigns on nutrition, physical activity, not smoking, knowing our numbers, blood pressure, blood glucose, and cholesterol, it's not easy, behavioral change is not easy. But we need to get around this as much as we can to really make a difference."* – Ralph Sacco, MD, Past President, American Heart Association

*"I think what the message from the physicians is number one, to make clear to the patient what are the important things they can do about their lifestyle. So again, weight loss, eating the right diet with a lot of fruit and vegetables in it, low-fat dairy products, and other low-fat items."* – Lawrence Fine, MD, Chief, Clinical Applications and Prevention Branch, National Heart, Lung, Blood Institute

*"I think that the most important thing we can do is get the message out that, the choices that you make on a day to day basis are important with what's going to happen with your blood pressure."* – Elizabeth Ross, MD, Private Practice Physician

*"Whether you get your regular exercise every day, do you keep your weight under control; those are all the prescriptions only our patients can fill."* – Elizabeth Ross, MD, Private Practice Physician

By taking an active role, patients can manage their high blood pressure.

*"Well, when I first started doing blood pressure readings I didn't know what the numbers, what high blood pressure was. So you have to learn and you have to ask to find out. There's no dumb question."* – Ron, VA Patient

*"My blood pressure's gone down to 120 over 80...exercise, dieting, drinking more water, less sodas."* – Joyce, Patient

*"Well, it's important to know your blood pressure because it would affect how you live your whole life. How you eat and how you exercise. It's not difficult you just have to buckle down and do it."* Colleen, Patient