

Quiz: What do you know about hypertension?

True or false?

1. Blood pressure below 140/90 is considered normal.

True. But systolic pressure between 120 and 139 mm Hg or diastolic pressure between 80 and 89 mmHg is considered *prehypertension*, which also increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. Without lifestyle changes, prehypertension is likely to develop into high blood pressure.

2. Eating less salt can lower blood pressure.

True. However, most dietary salt comes from consumption of processed foods rather than salt added at the table to home-cooked foods.

3. Lifestyle changes can prevent high blood pressure.

True. Quitting smoking, avoiding harmful use of alcohol, getting more exercise, and eating less processed food can help prevent high blood pressure. However, for people who develop high blood pressure, medication is generally needed to control it.

4. Preventing hypertension and its complications is mainly an issue of individual responsibility.

False. The most effective prevention measures are in the realm of public policy. These include urban planning and transportation measures that encourage physical activity and persuading the food industry to reduce salt in industrially processed foods.

5. Knowing your numbers is the first step to lowering your chances of hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

True. Everyone should get their blood pressure checked regularly. If it is 140/90 or higher, talk to your healthcare provider about treatment. If you are prescribed medication, be sure to take it faithfully and as directed.