

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **New Blood Pressure**
- **Tips**
- **Mashed Sweet Potatoes**
- **Did you Know?**

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## What is My Blood Pressure Supposed to Be?

**What is my blood pressure supposed to be?** Well, this just changed. Fresh off the press there is a new number in town. The newest recommendation for blood pressure is now less than 130/80 mmHg.

**Why is Blood Pressure so Important?** Death can be prevented by treating high blood pressure. High blood pressure is known as the silent killer. It is well known to cause harm to multiple body systems when it is elevated. Elevated blood pressure can double the risk of heart attack, stroke, and vascular disease to name a few. There may be no symptoms for high blood pressure so the diagnosis and treatment is aimed at the blood pressure reading.



**What are the new Stages of Blood Pressure?** There are now 4 stages or classifications for blood pressure.

1. Normal is less than 120/80 mmHg.
2. Elevated is 120-129 systolic with diastolic being less than 80 mmHg.
3. Hypertension Stage I is 130-139/80-89 mmHg.
4. Hypertension Stage II is greater than 140/90 mmHg.

Now, there are some rules that

apply with this new staging system. Blood pressure readings should be based on the averages of at least two readings on two separate occasions. The blood pressure should also be accurately taken. It is recommended that the blood pressure is taken after sitting quietly for 5 minutes and waiting at least 30 minutes after smoking, exercising, or having caffeine.

**What are some common causes of high blood pressure?** Based on the current research, obesity is the most common cause of high blood pressure. There can be a genetic cause of high blood pressure but overall this makes up a small percentage of cases. High sodium (salt) intake has been shown to raise the blood pressure, especially in salt sensitive people.

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## Tip of the Month

**Tips to Keep the Weight off during the Holidays:**

1. Eat Breakfast and don't skip meals. This will lead to ultimately overeating and taking in more calories thru the day.
2. Stay hydrated. Drink a glass of water before each meal.
3. Use a smaller plate and fill with vegetables first. Eat a salad before the meal.
4. Don't eat around the TV. This can lead to overeating. Instead, sit around the table with your family and enjoy a good conversation.
5. Stay active. Go for a walk after your meal. Play basketball or football with the kids. (2,3).



# Mashed Sweet Potatoes



Recipe from the book  
**Breaking the Salt Habit** by  
Erik Williams. (1).

## Ingredients:

2 lbs. Sweet Potatoes  
2 Tbsp. Honey  
2 Tbsp. Unsalted Butter  
1/2 tsp. Cinnamon

## Directions:

1. Bake potatoes at 375 F for 45-60 minutes or until done.
2. When potatoes are finished, peel skin off and place in a large bowl.
3. Add remaining ingredients and mix with hand mixer.

## Health Information

Serving size Approx. 6 oz.  
Servings 5  
Calories 149  
Total fat 5g  
Saturated fat 3g  
Cholesterol 12mg  
Sodium 11 mg  
Total fiber 3 g  
Protein 1g  
Carbohydrates 26 g  
Potassium 166 mg  
Sugar 7 g

**Quote of the Month:** “The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.” Walt Disney

## Did you Know?



Did you know that some foods are very high in potassium? A diet high in potassium can help maintain a healthy blood pressure. It lessens the effect sodium has on the body and also makes the artery walls more relaxed. There are many fruits that are high in potassium. Some of these may include bananas, kiwis, oranges, apricots, prunes, raisins, figs, dried fruits, cantaloupe, and avocado. Some vegetables are also high in potassium. These include tomatoes, potatoes, spinach, okra, carrots, white mushrooms, baked beans, refried beans, beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, pumpkin, lentils, and legumes to name a few. Also vegetable juices are high in potassium. Some other foods that are high in potassium include dairy products such as milk and yogurt. Bran, granola,

seeds, nuts, molasses, and peanut butter are also high in potassium. If a low sodium diet is recommended, a salt substitute may be used to help add flavor to the foods. Salt substitutes are generally potassium based instead of sodium based. For this reason, a salt free broth may also be high in potassium. Chewing tobacco or snuff also has high potassium but that is not recommended as being a healthy choice. Can you have too much potassium? Yes. In someone who has kidney disease, they may not be able to get rid of potassium like a normal person. In fact, a low potassium diet may even be recommended in some people. Some medications also raise potassium levels so always check with your healthcare provider before significantly changing your diet. (5,6).

Salt sensitivity seems to increase with aging and is also common in the African American population. People that already have a higher blood pressure may be more sensitive to salt as well as people with other disease processes like diabetes and kidney disease. Potassium seems to do the opposite of sodium. A diet high in potassium can help keep the blood pressure in a normal range and minimize the effect of sodium on the blood pressure. So a diet that is low in potassium (diet low in fruits and vegetables) can actually cause a higher blood pressure.

A physically inactive lifestyle can also lend towards higher blood pressure. It is well known and well studied that exercise, even a modest amount, can lower blood pressure and help prevent or delay the onset of high pressure. Alcohol can raise blood pressure and is thought to account for about 10 percent of all high blood pressure cases.

There are some other less common causes of high blood pressure such as certain types of kidney disease, thyroid disease, sleep apnea, pheochromocytoma, adrenal disease, and aortic disease to name a few. Certain drugs can cause high blood pressure as well. These may include amphetamines, steroids, certain antidepressants and antipsychotic drugs, decongestants, birth control, anti-inflammatories, and some immunosuppressant drugs. There are herbs that can raise blood pressure as well like Ma Huang (ephedra) and St. John's Wort. Some recreational drugs like bath salts, cocaine, and methamphetamines can significantly increase blood pressure and should be avoided. Caffeine is a commonly used drug that is not thought about much as a drug but does have an increase on blood pressure.

It is well established that high blood pressure is a common issue worldwide but also a very preventable issue. This article has explained the new staging system for high blood pressure that was just released to help aid in the prevention of high blood pressure in years to come. While there are some causes that are not controllable, most of them are controllable and preventable by diet changes, exercise, avoiding smoking, and limiting alcohol intake. (4).

