



BONUS ARTICLE

Take the first step toward heart health: Be active

If blood pressure or cholesterol levels are a concern, the first thing to do is to start moving.

That's the message from the American Heart Association, which encourages physical activity as a first-line treatment for people with mild to moderate high blood pressure and cholesterol.



What's too high?

Blood pressure is considered high at 120/80, while a total cholesterol level of 200 or below is considered a healthy level. Total cholesterol is a measure of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol.

There's strong evidence that physical activity lowers blood pressure and has a positive impact on cholesterol levels, according to the American Heart Association article published in the August 2021 issue of the journal *Hypertension*. In addition, being active reduces the risk of heart disease by 21 percent.

What's active?

The article recommends following the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans:

- At least 150 minutes of moderate, or 75 minutes of vigorous, activity weekly
- Muscle strengthening exercises twice a week

In addition, move more and sit less.

Fitting it in

Some exercise is always better than none. To get more daily exercise:

- Go for a walk before work or on your lunch break.
- Try an online exercise or yoga program.
- Find a rec program for a sport you love, like tennis, soccer, or hockey.
- Find a dog walking route that's a little longer than usual.
- Play mini golf with friends, go bowling, or walk in the park.

For more information

A health care provider can give you more information on checking your cholesterol and blood pressure levels, and recommend a personalized exercise plan. ♦