



DECISION AID

High blood pressure: How can you lower it?

You have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (hypertension). That increases your risk of a heart attack, stroke and damage to your heart and kidneys. It is generally true that the higher your blood pressure, the greater your risk of developing these medical conditions. You can determine your individual risk of developing cardiovascular disease together with your doctor.

There are a number of ways you can change your lifestyle to lower high blood pressure. Medication is an option, too.

The aim of this decision aid is to help you choose a suitable treatment together with your doctors.

THESE ARE THE TREATMENT OPTIONS:

- Lifestyle changes**
- Losing some weight
 - Eating less salt
 - Drinking little or no alcohol
 - Getting more exercise
 - Not smoking

- Medication**
- Medicine for lowering blood pressure (antihypertensive medication)

*You can read about
the pros and cons of
these treatments on the
next pages.*

MAKING AN INFORMED DECISION

This decision aid probably won't include all of the information that you need. You will still need to talk to a doctor, but the decision aid can help you. The treatment decision will also depend on other factors besides your blood pressure levels, such as any other medical conditions you may have, your age, your expectations, and which treatments you have already tried and how successful they were.



Even if you find the symptoms very distressing, take the time to find out what you want to know and don't let anyone pressure you into making a decision.

SUMMARY OF TREATMENT OPTIONS

	Lifestyle changes	Medication
What does the treatment involve?	<p>Some people manage to keep their blood pressure under control by regularly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • losing some weight, • eating less salt, • drinking little or no alcohol, • not smoking, and • getting more exercise. 	<p>There are several classes of drugs designed to reduce blood pressure (also called antihypertensive medication or simply antihypertensives). ACE inhibitors, diuretics, calcium channel blockers and sartans (angiotensin receptor blockers, or ARBs) are most commonly used.</p> <p>The suitability of a medication will depend on various factors. It is best to talk to your doctor about which of the medications is suitable for you. The most important issue is whether you have any other medical conditions.</p> <p>This kind of medication is taken daily for a longer period of time.</p>
Who is the treatment suitable for?	<p>For most people with high blood pressure. But in certain circumstances making lifestyle changes is only possible in a limited way or not at all – or is at the very least rather difficult.</p>	<p>Whether taking medication for high blood pressure is a good idea will depend on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How high your blood pressure is • Which additional risk factors you have (e.g. being very overweight or having diabetes)
What are the effects of treatment?	<p>Some people can manage to lower their blood pressure enough by changing making changes to their lifestyle. Others have to take medication as well.</p>	<p>Antihypertensive medication also lowers your risk of cardiovascular (heart and circulation) disease. But the benefits of antihypertensives are not the same for everyone. They depend on your individual risk factors. You can benefit from treatment especially if you have very high blood pressure or if you already have other health problems resulting from the high blood pressure.</p>
What are the possible disadvantages of treatment?	<p>Making changes to your lifestyle doesn't typically have any major disadvantages for your health.</p>	<p>The possible side effects depend in the specific medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACE inhibitors: dry cough, swelling of the skin (angioedema) • Diuretics: increased urge to urinate, dehydration, increased blood sugar levels • Sartans (angiotensin receptor blockers, or ARBs): dry cough, swelling of the skin (angioedema)

YOUR DECISION

Now that you've read about your illness and the treatment options, you can use this section to weigh up the pros and cons of each treatment for yourself. Which treatment immediately appeals to you most? Which would you not want at all? Feel free to go back and re-read anything you want to check.

WHAT ARE YOUR CONCERNS?

You can use this table to note any concerns you have about choosing a treatment. If you like, you can take this decision aid with you to your next appointment and talk about it with your doctor.

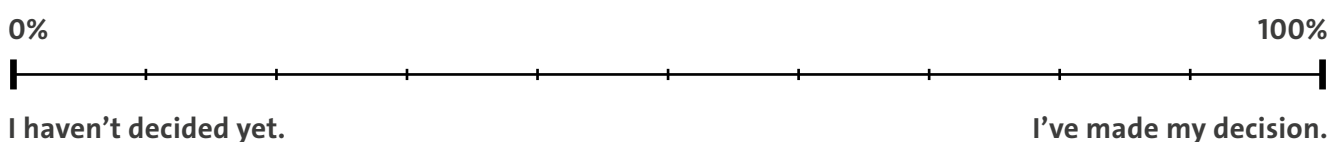
Rank the statements below starting with a 1 for the ones that apply most to you, 2 for the ones that don't apply quite as much, and so on. You can add your own statements too.

Statement	To what extent does this apply to me?
I am afraid of the possible effects of high blood pressure.	
I wonder whether my blood pressure is so high that I should have it treated.	
I would like to go without medication as much as possible.	
It is difficult for me to change my lifestyle.	
It's no problem for me to take tablets very day to treat my high blood pressure.	
I'm worried about the possible side effects of the medication.	
I would like to try to do something about my condition on my own.	

HOW FAR HAVE YOU GOT WITH YOUR DECISION?

You can use this section to work out how far along you are in your decision-making process.

Mark where you are on a scale of 0 to 100.



WHICH TREATMENT WOULD YOU CONSIDER?

You can use this table to rate the different treatment options. Mark the ones you would consider and what you like and don't like about them.

Which treatment would I consider?		What do I like about it?	What don't I like about it?
Lifestyle changes	<input type="radio"/>		
Medication	<input type="radio"/>		

IF YOU STILL AREN'T SURE: WHAT DO YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO MAKE A DECISION?

With all the different pros and cons to consider, it can be hard to choose a treatment.

If you need more help:

- You will find a link to further information on the next page.
- You can talk to your doctor again.
- Talking to friends and family can help you get a clear idea of what you want and expect.
- Patient information centers and self-help groups offer information and advice, and can help you learn from others' experiences.

YOU WILL FIND IN-DEPTH INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOLLOWING TOPIC ON THE INTERNET:



Blood pressure

www.informedhealth.org/high-blood-pressure.html

Does this decision aid not match your specific cardiovascular disease exactly, or does it not cover the specific treatment that was recommended to you? You may find this more general decision aid helpful instead:

www.informedhealth.org/decision-aid-treatments-for-cardiovascular-diseases.html

PREPARING FOR THE DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT

What remains unanswered? What concerns do you still have? Write down any questions or thoughts you may have, and take this decision aid with you to the appointment. You can ask the doctor about anything you would like to know or discuss anything you are worried about.

There's a list of possible questions here:

www.informedhealth.org/questions

The format of this decision aid is based on the following:

- Ottawa Personal Decision Guide. O'Connor, Stacey, Jacobsen 2012. Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and University of Ottawa, Canada.
- MAKING SDM A REALITY – Vollimplementierung von Shared Decision Making im Krankenhaus – G-BA Innovationsfonds 2023



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