Having high blood pressure can lead to health problems such as heart disease, stroke, or kidney problems.

The good news is physical activity can help!

This handout describes:

- how much physical activity you should do; and
- how physical activity can affect your blood pressure.

**How much physical activity should I do?**

It is important to be active most days of the week. *Aerobic activities* can help improve and manage your blood pressure.

*Aerobic activities* work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing and swimming.

The following table describes your aerobic physical activity “prescription.”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Aerobic Physical Activity “Prescription”</strong></th>
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<td><strong>How often?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>How hard?</strong></td>
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What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Note: A fitness professional or recreation coordinator can show you some safe exercises that work best for you.

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- *how long* you are active
- *how often* you are active
- *how hard* you work

**How does physical activity affect my blood pressure?**

While you are *doing* an aerobic activity, your blood pressure changes.

- The top number (called systolic) will rise when you are active. The harder you work, the higher this number can go.
- The bottom number (called diastolic) will stay about the same. In some people it may drop slightly. This is normal.
- If your blood pressure is too high, your health care provider may
  - tell you to monitor your blood pressure when you are active; or
  - give you blood pressure ranges, so you can stay safe when active.

Your blood pressure will be lower *after* you have done an aerobic physical activity.

- This decrease in your blood pressure can last several hours. This is one of the reasons why daily physical activity is recommended; you get health benefits right away!
• Often, those with very high blood pressure will see the greatest change.
• You may see a larger decrease if your physical activity session is longer, or if you work harder.

What is your current blood pressure? ____________________________

What is your ideal blood pressure? ____________________________

**Blood pressure changes OVER TIME**

Over time, regular physical activity may help you reach a healthy blood pressure level.

**Fun Fact:**

Most people who become regularly active can lower their systolic blood pressure by *seven points* and their diastolic pressure by *five points*.

Such as:

• Blood pressure before becoming active = 154/98
• Blood pressure after 4 months of being active = 147/93

The more often you are active, the sooner you may see these changes.

*Keep it fun. Make physical activity a big part of your life.*
More benefits

Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many other benefits, such as:

• reducing your need for blood pressure medication;
• improving how well your heart works;
• giving you more control over your body weight;
• helping you to manage stress;
• improving how well you sleep; and
• boosting your energy and strength.

Remember:

• Aerobic physical activities can help you manage and improve your blood pressure.
• You will see many other benefits from being more active.
• Keep it fun! Make fun physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do today to start being more active?