

# High Blood Pressure: After Pregnancy

What you can do to decrease your risks



## Things to do **EVERY DAY** for healthy women and babies:

**Exercise** – 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week

**Vitamin** – 400 micrograms (mcg) of Folic Acid per day

**Educate** yourself about medicines and chemicals that can cause birth defects

**Reproductive life planning** – set your personal goals for birth control and future children

**Yearly doctor visits** to discuss physical and mental wellness

**Diet** – Vegetables, fruits, and whole grains daily

**Avoid** tobacco, drugs, and alcohol

**Your partner, friends, and family** should be sources of support

Content from [everywomanocalifornia.org](http://everywomanocalifornia.org) with permission from the Preconception Health Council of California.



## About high blood pressure

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, means that your heart has to work too hard to pump your blood through your body. High blood pressure may not make you feel sick, but not taking care of it can cause you to have a stroke, heart attack or kidney problems.

## What can you do now to improve your health?

- Visit your health care provider regularly to check your blood pressure to make sure it is healthy. If your provider gives you medications, keep taking them.
- Quit smoking and don't drink alcohol.
- Work slowly to get back to your pre-pregnancy weight. If you were overweight before pregnancy, talk to your provider about losing weight gradually to get to a healthy weight.
- Increase your physical activity to at least 30 minutes on most days.
- Limit salt (sodium) and salty foods.
- Eat foods that will help your body and blood pressure: fruits and vegetables; low-fat or nonfat milk, yogurt and cheese; whole grains like brown rice, corn tortillas and whole wheat bread; and lean meats, beans or tofu. Avoid fried food, oil, margarine, butter, and cream.

## Should high blood pressure change your plans to have another baby?

This mainly depends on how well your kidneys are functioning to filter your blood. Your kidney function is measured by a blood test.

- If your kidneys show a lot of damage and you choose to get pregnant again, it may be risky for your health and your baby. Ask your health care provider about these risks.
- If you have mild kidney damage, talk to your provider to plan your next pregnancy.
- If you have no kidney damage, keep taking your medications and vitamins; pregnancy should be fine as long as your blood pressure is treated.

To avoid an unplanned pregnancy, talk to your provider about your birth control options. Women with high blood pressure should avoid estrogen-containing contraceptives (like "the Pill"), but your provider can recommend other contraceptives that are safe if you have high blood pressure. Getting your blood pressure under control and getting healthy before your next pregnancy can help you have a healthy pregnancy and baby.

## Remember your ABCs:

folic  cid  reastfeeding  ontraception

## For more information, go to:

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists:  
[acog.org/publications/faq/faq034.cfm](http://acog.org/publications/faq/faq034.cfm)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
[cdc.gov/bloodpressure/materials\\_for\\_patients.htm](http://cdc.gov/bloodpressure/materials_for_patients.htm)

Every Woman California: [everywomanocalifornia.org/content.cfm?categoriesID=4](http://everywomanocalifornia.org/content.cfm?categoriesID=4)

March of Dimes: [marchofdimes.com/Pregnancy/complications\\_highbloodpressure.html](http://marchofdimes.com/Pregnancy/complications_highbloodpressure.html)

## Interconception Care Project for California

A collaborative project led by ACOG District IX with funding provided by March of Dimes



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