

Management of Adults with Essential Hypertension

The following guideline recommends diagnostic evaluation, education and pharmacologic treatment that support effective patient self-management.

Eligible Population	Key Components	Recommendation and Level of Evidence
Adult patients \geq 18 years of age. Not pregnant. Classification based on mean of 2 or more seated BP readings on each of 2 or more office visits. Normal BP <120/<80 Prehypertension 120-139/80-89 Hypertension: Stage 1 140-159/90-99 Stage 2 >160/>100	Initial assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objectives of the initial evaluation are to assess lifestyle, cardiovascular risk factors, concomitant disorders, reveal identifiable causes of hypertension and check for target organ damage and cardiovascular disease. Physical examination: 2 or more BP measurements separated by at least 2 minutes, verification in contralateral arm, funduscopic exam, neck exam (bruits), heart and lung exam, abdominal exam for bruits or aortic aneurysm, extremity pulses [A] Laboratory tests prior to initiating therapy: Potassium, creatinine, glucose, calcium, urinalysis, lipid panel, EKG [D]
	Patient education and nonpharmacologic interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifestyle changes: weight reduction (BMI goal < 25), reduction of dietary sodium to less than 2.4 gm/day, aerobic physical activity 30 minutes most days of the week, tobacco avoidance, increased dietary potassium and calcium, moderation of alcohol consumption¹ [A] Use of self BP monitoring. Home measurement device should be checked regularly for accuracy. Mean self measured BP > 135/85 generally considered to be hypertensive
	Goals of therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target BP < 140/90 (<130/80 for patients with diabetes or kidney disease)
	Pharmacologic interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal BP (<120/<80): not applicable; encourage lifestyle modification if indicated Prehypertension (120-139/80-89): none unless compelling indication (e.g., diabetes, renal failure, CHF, post-MI, stroke) Hypertension, Stage 1 (140-159/90-99): Thiazide-type diuretics Hypertension, Stage 2 (\geq160/\geq100): two-drug combination (thiazide-type diuretic plus angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor (ACEI), beta blocker or calcium channel blocker (extended/sustained release or long-acting)²; use angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) if ACEI not tolerated ACEI (ARB if ACEI not tolerated) are recommended in patients with diabetes or heart failure [A] Beta-blockers are recommended in patients with ischemic heart disease 3 or more drugs may be necessary for some patients to achieve goal BP
	Monitoring [D]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal BP without medication: BP check every 2 years Prehypertension without medication: annual BP check with lifestyle modification counseling Hypertension, Stage 1: initiate therapy and recheck at monthly intervals until goal is reached Hypertension, Stage 2: initiate therapy and recheck weekly or more often as indicated. Symptomatic Stage 2 may require hospital monitoring and treatment Once BP controlled with medication: recheck every 3-6 months Serum potassium and creatinine should be monitored at least 1-2 times/year for patients on medication

¹ Moderate alcohol consumption is defined as up to two drinks per day for men, one drink per day for women and older people.

² Avoid use of short-acting nonsustained release calcium channel blockers [A]

Levels of Evidence for the most significant recommendations: A = randomized controlled trials; B = controlled trials, no randomization; C = observational studies; D = opinion of expert panel

This guideline lists core management steps. It is based on the 2003 Seventh Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (www.nhbi.nih.gov). Individual patient considerations and advances in medical science may supersede or modify these recommendations.