



Know Your Numbers

Your guide to maintaining good health

*Helpful information from
Providence Medical Center and
Saint John Hospital*

If it has been awhile since your last check up and you are searching for a physician, call our Physician Referral Line toll free at 1-800-281-7777.

Or you can click on www.providence-health.org and go to the *Find a Physician* tab.



Know Your Numbers

Do any of these sound familiar? *BP, BMI, HDL, LDL, BG*-these are abbreviations for some very important numbers that can help you stay healthy. Knowing your numbers is a proactive step that you can take to maintain and improve your health.

During your next check-up, ask your doctor about your blood pressure (BP), body mass index (BMI), total cholesterol, HDL (good cholesterol), LDL (bad cholesterol), triglycerides and blood glucose (BG). These numbers can reveal your current health status and your risks for future health conditions and diseases, such as heart attack, heart failure, stroke and diabetes. You can use this brochure to help you better understand how each of these measurements affects your health.

The health care team at Providence Medical Center and Saint John Hospital is ready to help you take control of your numbers and your health. Providence, close to The Legends at Village West and I-435, and Saint John, in Leavenworth, provide comprehensive health services to those who live and work in Wyandotte, Leavenworth and northern Johnson counties. Our board-certified physicians, specialists, nurses and technicians are committed to take you and your family well into the future.

What Your Numbers Mean

Blood Pressure

What it is: Blood pressure (BP) is the measure of the pressure in your arteries, the blood vessels that carry blood from the heart to all of the cells and tissues of the body. BP consists of two numbers. The top number is the force in the arteries when the heart beats (systolic pressure) and the bottom number is when the heart is at rest (diastolic pressure).

Your target: The top number should be **equal to or below 130** and the bottom number should be **equal to or below 85**.

Why it is important: When narrowing of the blood vessels occurs, it causes an increase in pressure. If your blood pressure is higher than normal (above 140/90), you may have hypertension. This means you are at greater risk for heart attack, heart failure, stroke, pulmonary edema (swelling) and kidney damage.

How your doctor can help: By monitoring your BP and asking about your symptoms (if there are any), your physician can conduct further tests to assess your risks, recommend lifestyle changes to reduce and control your BP, and if necessary, prescribe medications called anti-hypertensives to keep your BP at a safe number.

What you can do: Sometimes minor lifestyle changes can control high blood pressure. By changing your diet, exercising regularly, maintaining a sensible weight, reducing stress, avoiding certain medications and not smoking, you may be able to lower your blood pressure without a prescription. If your BP is high, have it checked regularly.

Hypertension is called the “silent killer” because there are often no symptoms. Your BP may increase temporarily when you exercise or experience stress, but when you are resting, it should not be higher than 140/90.

For more information about your BP, go to www.americanheart.org.



Body Mass Index

What it is: Body mass index (BMI) is a number calculated from a person's weight and height. BMI provides a reliable indicator of body fatness for most people.

Your target: For adults, the target BMI is **18 to 24.9**. For children and teens, the target BMI is age- and gender-specific. Go to www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/childrens for specific guidelines.

Why it is important: For adults, BMI is an easy-to-perform method of screening for weight categories that may lead to health problems. For children, BMI is used as a screening tool to identify possible weight problems. Overweight and obese individuals are at increased risk for many diseases, including diabetes.

How your doctor can help: If you are an adult and your BMI is higher than 25, your physician may recommend further assessments to determine if your weight is a health risk. In children and teens, your physician can use BMI to help determine if the child or teen is underweight, at a healthy weight, at risk of being overweight or at an unhealthy weight.

What you can do: Go to www.cdc.gov and type in "Body Mass Index" in the Search field. The web site provides information on BMI and BMI calculators for adults, teens and children. The web site also provides information about the risks of obesity, the benefits of good nutrition and exercise.

Cholesterol

What it is: Cholesterol is a type of fat in your blood. There are different types. **LDL** cholesterol is sometimes called “bad” cholesterol because it can narrow or block your blood vessels. **HDL** cholesterol is sometimes called “good” cholesterol because it helps remove deposits from the inside of your blood vessels.

Your target: **less than 100 mg/dL for LDL** (the lower, the better for LDL); **HDL of 40 to 50 mg/dL for men and 50 to 60 mg/dL for women** (the higher, the better for HDL). **Total cholesterol should be less than 180 mg/dL.**

If you have heart disease or diabetes, your target: **less than 70 mg/dL for LDL. Total cholesterol should be less than 160 mg/dL.**

Why it is important: Your cholesterol level is one of several factors including age, family history, smoking, weight, activity level and high blood pressure, that contributes to your risk of cardiovascular and heart disease.

How your doctor can help: By checking your blood cholesterol level and monitoring it on a regular basis, your physician can help you devise a plan that keeps your numbers in check. If your cholesterol level is high, your doctor may recommend lifestyle changes such as eating a heart-healthy diet and increasing your activity level. Your doctor may also prescribe medication that helps lower your cholesterol level.

What you can do: Even if your cholesterol levels are good now, it's not too early to develop lifestyle habits that will keep you healthy. The first step is to have your cholesterol checked. Discuss the results with your physician and agree on a plan that will help keep you healthy. Lifestyle changes and medication can bring your numbers down to a safe level.

More women die from heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases than men, yet many women do not realize they are at risk.

Go to www.americanheart.org to learn more about how high cholesterol levels contribute to cardiovascular disease.

Coronary heart disease is America's number one killer. Stroke is number three and a leading cause of serious disability. It is essential to know your numbers so you can reduce your risks.

Providence is an accredited Chest Pain Center.* Our team of emergency medicine and cardiac experts meet or exceed the national standards for treating patients with chest pain quickly and efficiently.

*Accredited by the Society of Chest Pain Centers. Only seven percent of all United States hospitals achieve accreditation.



Triglycerides

What it is: Triglycerides are another type of fat in your blood. People with high triglycerides often have a high total cholesterol level, including high LDL (bad cholesterol) and low HDL (good cholesterol) levels.

Your target: **Less than 150 mg/dL**

Why it is important: High triglyceride levels increase your risk of a heart attack or stroke. Unlike many risk factors, high triglycerides are often a lifestyle-related risk factor. In many cases, a change in behaviors related to eating and activity level can lower triglyceride levels.

How your doctor can help: By testing your triglyceride levels, your physician can explain your risk level and recommend appropriate lifestyle changes. Occasionally, medication is prescribed.

What you can do: Many people have high triglyceride levels due to obesity, physical inactivity, cigarette smoking, excess alcohol consumption and/or a diet very high in carbohydrates (60 percent or more of calories). Learn about lifestyle changes such as eating a heart-healthy diet, getting regular physical activity, avoiding tobacco and limiting your intake of alcohol and high-sugar foods. Create an action plan and stick to it.

Blood Glucose

What it is: Glucose is a type of sugar in your blood that comes from carbohydrates. It is the main source of energy used by the body.

Your target: Before eating: **70 to 100 mg/dL**; after eating: **no greater than 120 mg/dL**.

Why it is important: Normally, your blood glucose levels increase slightly after you eat. This increase causes your pancreas to release a hormone called insulin so that your blood glucose levels do not get too high. If your body does not produce or properly use insulin, you may be diagnosed with diabetes, a disease that over time, can damage your eyes, kidneys, nerves and blood vessels. Individuals with diabetes are also at high risk for heart disease and stroke.

How your doctor can help: To determine whether you have pre-diabetes or diabetes, your doctor will conduct a Fasting Plasma Glucose Test (FPG) or an Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT). If your blood glucose test is abnormal, you may have pre-diabetes, Type 1 diabetes, Type 2 diabetes or gestational diabetes. Your doctor will work with you to develop a plan to stabilize your blood glucose level, a step that is essential to avoid the many risks associated with this disease.

What you can do: You will need to change several aspects of your lifestyle. Although there is no cure for diabetes, there are many strategies to control the disease. You may need to change your diet and monitor your blood glucose level several times each day. Most likely, your doctor will recommend regular exercise and you may need to take medication or insulin injections to ensure that your blood glucose levels remain in a normal range.

Diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death by disease in the United States. It is a serious and complex disease, but with the help of specialized health care providers, it can be managed effectively.



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