

Focus on life. Focus on health. *Stay focused.*

# Achieve Your Best Health

*Health Coaching for High Blood Pressure*



**Blue Option**<sup>SM</sup>

BlueChoice HealthPlan of South Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.



## What is health coaching?

Health coaching is a voluntary program for members diagnosed with certain health conditions. We take a personalized and tailored approach that helps you manage your condition and cope with everyday issues so you can meet your health goals.

You'll have a personal coach to support, guide and motivate you to make healthy lifestyle changes at your own pace. Your coach can:

- Help identify barriers to reaching and maintaining your health goals.
- Personalize your plan for better health.
- Help you find a physician if you don't have one.
- Help you get the most out of your health benefits.

## Is health coaching for me?

Health coaching is especially helpful to members who:

- Want to know more about managing their health condition(s).
- Make frequent emergency room visits.
- Use multiple medications for their health condition(s).
- Experience frequent hospitalizations.

## Your personal health coach

Your coach will work with you to establish goals for your health, then help you work toward achieving your goals. Each health coach is a health care professional with extensive training and knowledge. Your personal coach is a partner who can guide and support you to make positive lifestyle changes to better manage your health.

## We are here for you

We know it's not always easy to make a lifestyle change and stick to it. Our health coaches will ensure you have the information and tools to make the transition to a healthier lifestyle. We also understand that managing a health condition can be complicated. You can feel confident knowing your coach is there to support you each step of the way. Also, your personal information is safe. Your health coach is a professional who respects your privacy and will keep the details of your action plan confidential.

Our health coaches care about you and want to help you reach your health goals. Your coach can provide the encouragement, support and education you need. He or she can help you identify the barriers that keep you from reaching your health goals, adopt healthy habits that fit your lifestyle and connect you with other helpful resources.

As you take steps to manage your health, you may face challenges. But you can overcome them with the help of your friends, family and our health coaching team!

# What do you need to know about high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against your blood vessels as it flows through your body. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, means that you have too much pressure on your vessels — which can damage your heart and lead to life-threatening conditions, such as heart disease and stroke. High blood pressure is often referred to as the silent killer because most people do not display symptoms or early signs.

## How is high blood pressure diagnosed?

### Measuring blood pressure:

- **Systolic:** This is the top — and higher — number in your blood pressure reading. It measures the pressure in your arteries when the heart beats and the muscle is contracting.
- **Diastolic:** This is the bottom — or lower — number in your blood pressure reading. It measures the pressure in your arteries between heartbeats when the muscle is resting and refilling with blood.

### Categories for blood pressure:

- **Normal:** Less than 120 (systolic) and less than 80 (diastolic)
- **Prehypertension:** 120-139 (systolic) or 80-89 (diastolic)
- **Hypertension stage one:** 140-159 (systolic) or 90-99 (diastolic)
- **Hypertension stage two:** 160 or higher (systolic) or 100 or higher (diastolic)

Your health care provider may individualize your targeted blood pressure goal based on your age and gender.

## What can you do to keep your symptoms under control?

**Eat a heart-healthy diet.** Limit your sodium intake to 1,500 mg or less per day. Fill your plate with whole grains, fruits, vegetables and lean protein. Avoid processed meats like bacon, sausage and cold cuts, and high-cholesterol foods like margarine, baked goods, fried foods and snack foods.

DO EAT	LIMIT
Vegetables	Red and cured meats
Fruits	Sugar and baked goods
Fat-free dairy products	Pickled food and olives
Whole grains	Packaged soup and frozen dinners
Fish and poultry	Salad dressings and crackers
Beans, seeds, nuts and vegetable oils	

**Maintain a healthy weight.** Gradual, permanent weight loss can significantly lower your risk of heart disease, cancer and other health problems. Stay away from fad diets – they may help you lose weight quickly but are usually not helpful in the long run. Exercise, along with a balanced diet, can help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity, five days a week. Find a type of exercise you enjoy and stick to it.

**Limit alcohol.** Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure. Men should have no more than two drinks per day and women should have no more than one drink per day. One drink is defined as 12 ounces of beer, 4 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of liquor.

**Quit smoking, or don't start.** Smoking is the No. 1 risk factor for heart disease and the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. It raises your blood pressure and can have negative effects on your cholesterol. If you smoke, work with your health coach to create a quit plan that works for you.

# Don't neglect your emotional health

## Manage stress

Individuals with certain health conditions may be more likely to feel down or depressed, and stress can make any of us feel worse. Take time for yourself, identify ways to minimize your stress and talk to your doctor if you have feelings of depression or anxiety. Here are some tips:

**Exercise.** Even moderate exercise can help reduce stress and relieve depression.

**Relaxation and breathing exercises.** Relaxation exercises, such as yoga, are proven to help relieve stress.

**Relax and communicate.** When you feel tired, take a break. And when you feel stressed, talk it out. Sharing your thoughts with others can help.

**Think positively.** Be mindful of your "self talk" — the mental images you create for yourself.

**Don't depend on alcohol, tobacco or other drugs to cope with stress.** If you think you may be dependent on any of these substances, contact your doctor right away for help.



“I am so glad we have a program available to us and that I can call with any questions. I think I am doing a good job, but it is nice to know that I can call when I need to.”

– Health coaching participant

### Tackle the blues

When you have a health condition, you may be more likely to feel down or depressed. Depression is common, but treatable. To see if you may need additional support, look over these statements and think about how you’ve felt in the last two weeks. Check if you have:

- Felt sad or down.
- Not cared about things you liked before.
- Been eating more or less than usual.
- Felt tired.
- Felt anxious.
- Not been able to think or make up your mind.
- Felt like you are not worth much.
- Been sleeping more or less than usual.
- Thought about dying or killing yourself.

If you checked five or more, talk to your health care provider or your health coach about whether you might be depressed. If you are, it’s important to get help so you can get back to enjoying life.

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# Your relationship with your health care team is important

The best thing for managing hypertension and preventing complications is to develop a good relationship with your health care team, which may include your primary care physician, a health coach and others. Keeping open communication with your health care team is important and helps you play an active role in your care.

## During your visit

Questions for your health care team may include:

- What are the three most important things I can do to manage my blood pressure?
- What changes should I make to my diet and lifestyle?
- Is medicine necessary? If so, how long should I take my medicine?
- Are there any side effects to my medicine? If so, is there anything I can do about them?
- How often should I check my blood pressure?
- When should I come back for a follow-up appointment?







## Medications can help

Your doctor may prescribe an angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor or an angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) to help improve your heart health. These medicines help lower your blood pressure, reduce your risk of heart attacks and strokes, and keep your kidneys healthy.

Your doctor may also prescribe diuretics. These medicines work by eliminating excess sodium (salt) and water from your body to help control blood pressure.

If you have been taking these medicines for six months or longer, it is important to follow up with your doctor for recommended lab tests to make sure your medication regimen is working.

Recommended lab tests are:

- Serum potassium therapeutic monitoring test
- Serum creatinine therapeutic monitoring test

## Participant's Bill of Rights

Health coaches respect the wishes of participants and their family members and recognize that participants have RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES, including the:

- Right to know the philosophy and characteristics of the health coaching program.
- Right to have personally identifiable health information shared by the health coaching program only in accordance with state and federal law.
- Right to identify a staff member and his or her job title, and to speak with a supervisor of a staff member, if requested.
- Right to receive accurate information from the health coaching program.
- Right to receive administrative information about changes in or termination of the health coaching program.
- Right to decline participation, revoke consent or disenroll at any time.
- Responsibility to submit any forms necessary to participate in the program, to the extent the law requires.
- Responsibility to give accurate clinical and contact information, and to notify the health coaching program of changes in this information.
- Responsibility to notify their treating providers of their participation in the health coaching program, if applicable.
- Understand when disease management information will be disclosed to third parties.

Health coaches inform members of these rights and uphold them at all times during the program. All members receive a written copy of these rights and responsibilities within 30 days of program enrollment.

**“Thank you for being there for me. The combination of having you and my doctor has really turned my life around.”**

**– Health coaching participant**

## You make the choice

*Health coaching is completely voluntary and free.*

Your decision to participate will not affect your health benefits in any way. If you decide that having a personal health coach is not for you, you can opt out of the program at any time by calling 855-838-5897. If you have a problem or complaint during your health coaching experience, you can call 855-838-5897 and ask to speak to the program manager. In an emergency, please contact your doctor or call 911.

## Additional resources

These resources can provide additional information about living well with hypertension. These are independent organizations that provide health information on behalf of your health plan.

American Heart Association

[www.Heart.org](http://www.Heart.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention


[www.CDC.gov/BloodPressure](http://www.CDC.gov/BloodPressure)

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

These links lead to third party websites. Those companies are solely responsible for the contents and privacy policies on their sites.

The information contained in this brochure is for educational purposes only. It does not represent a standard of care. Your physician must determine the appropriateness of the information in light of all your circumstances. It is important to discuss options with your physician when deciding on the best treatment for you.



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