

## Module 1, Lesson 2 Handout:

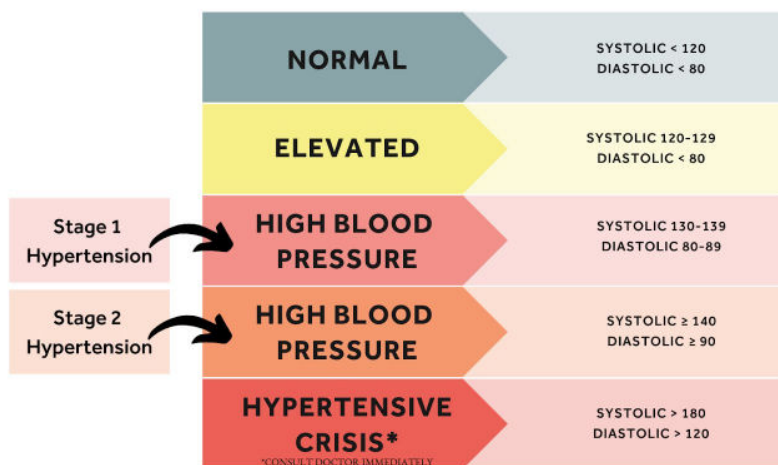
# Blood Pressure & Hypertension

Even though you may not be physically measuring clients' blood pressure, it's important to know what the numbers mean and what you can do to improve their blood pressure reading.

First, you'll want to get familiar with what the numbers mean.

In a blood pressure reading, there are two numbers that are written in fraction form. The top number or first number is referred to as **systolic blood pressure** - this tells you how much pressure is being exerted against the heart walls during a contraction, or how forceful the blood is being pushed out of the heart. The bottom number or second number is referred to as the **diastolic blood pressure** - this measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is relaxed between contractions.

Use the chart below as a guide to easily differentiate between blood pressure readings and how they relate to the stages of hypertension.\* For normal blood pressure, the goal is to be below 120/80.



*\*During a hypertensive crisis, your client may have symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath, visual changes, dizziness and headache. They should go to the emergency room immediately.*

## **Risk Reduction**

If you have a client with elevated blood pressure or a strong family history, make sure you talk to them about these behavior and diet modifications that they can make to improve their cardiovascular health, reduce blood pressure and reduce their risk of hypertension.

### **Reduce Sodium**

Have your client reduce their sodium intake immediately. Ask about salt use, processed foods, convenience foods, take out and dining out frequency. Collaborate to find alternative choices and help them to make good decisions by using herbs and spices instead of the salt shaker, requesting no salt in restaurants and swapping packaged snacks for fresh foods.

### **Avoid Added Sugar**

Take a look at how much added sugar your client is consuming as well. Most people realize there is a connection between sodium and blood pressure, but many people don't know about the connection between added sugar and the heart. You can refer back to the handouts on sugar from Level 1.

### **Reduce Caffeine & Alcohol.**

Both are hard on the ticker and non nutritive, so again, come up with alternatives like decaf, herbal tea, mocktails and H2O. The key here for most clients is to reduce - not necessarily eliminate completely.

### **Exercise**

Incorporating walking into each and every day is found to be beneficial. Weekend warriors are not as successful at managing their blood pressure as daily walkers. Absolutely encourage other exercise and movement and avoid sedentary activities as much as possible.

### **Manage Stress**

You know cortisol is hard on the heart. Help your clients Stress Less with blood pressure lowering activities like breathing, meditation and active relaxation.