

Health Awareness

Four Numbers You Need To Know To Stay Healthy

(NAPSA)—We need to remember plenty of numbers—phone, debit card PIN, ZIP code, Social Security and many others.

But do you know your most important health numbers? Knowing these—and doing something about them—can improve your health and reduce your medical costs. Some essential numbers to know and keep an eye on are blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index and blood glucose.

Taking a health assessment can help you learn how to use these numbers to positively impact your overall health. Most health insurers, like Health Alliance Plan (HAP), offer this resource to help you examine your overall health, identify high-risk areas and receive recommendations to support healthy habits.

Here are some key numbers to monitor and tips from HAP to stay in the right range.

1. Less than 120/80 mmHg—blood pressure. The top number (systolic) measures how hard the heart is pumping; the lower number (diastolic) measures its pressure at rest. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, occurs when the force of blood against the walls of your arteries and veins is elevated. High blood pressure cannot be cured, but it can be controlled.

Blood pressure indicators are: less than 120/80, normal; 120–139/80–89, prehypertension; 140–159/90–99, stage 1 high blood pressure; and 160 and above/100 and above, stage 2 high blood pressure.

Tips: Eat right, exercise to maintain a healthy weight, quit smoking and lower salt intake. Cook meals with fresh ingredients, and cut back on processed foods and fast food.

2. Less than 200 mg/dL—cholesterol. High cholesterol is one of the biggest risk factors for heart disease. Too much cholesterol can collect and harden on the walls of your arteries, blocking blood flow.

Good levels are less than 200 mg/dL for total cholesterol, less than 100 mg/dL for LDL (“bad” cholesterol) and >50 mg/dL for HDL (“good” cholesterol). It’s ideal to have a low LDL level and high HDL level.

Tips: Eat foods low in fat (especially saturated fat) and low in cholesterol to lower LDL (bad) levels. Exercising regularly and quitting smoking increase HDL (good) levels.

3. 18.5–24.9 kg/m²—body mass index (BMI). BMI is based on weight and



Better physical and fiscal health starts with a health assessment.

height and is an estimate of body fat. It can indicate your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, gallstones, breathing problems and certain cancers. BMI values vary by sex, race and age. A healthcare provider can perform further assessments.

BMI levels are categorized as: below 18.5, underweight; 18.5–24.9, normal; 25–29.9, overweight; and 30 and above, obese. Go to cdc.gov for a BMI calculator.

Tips: Make healthy food choices and be more active. Join a supervised weight-loss program, and participate in nutritional counseling with a registered dietitian.

4. Less than or equal to 100 mg/dL—blood glucose. This is how much sugar (glucose) is in your blood. A glucose test can check for diabetes, see how diabetes treatment is working and check for blood sugar levels.

Normal values for adults without prediabetes or diabetes: fasting test, less than or equal to 100; 2 hours after eating (postprandial), less than 140 if age 50 or younger, less than 150 if age 50 to 60, and less than 160 if age 60 and older; and random (casual) testing, generally 80 to 120 before meals or when waking up and 100 to 140 at bedtime.

Tips: Avoid foods with sugar or carbohydrates. Drink water or calorie-free liquids. Avoid coffee, alcohol, soda pop and anything with a lot of sugar in it.

A health assessment is a key part of a healthier you. Knowing your numbers and using them to initiate positive changes can make a real difference in your health—and your life.

Visit hap.org/health for other health and wellness tips.