



Managing high blood pressure

Why is it important to treat high blood pressure?

How can I keep my blood pressure under control?

What kind of food can I eat if I have high blood pressure?

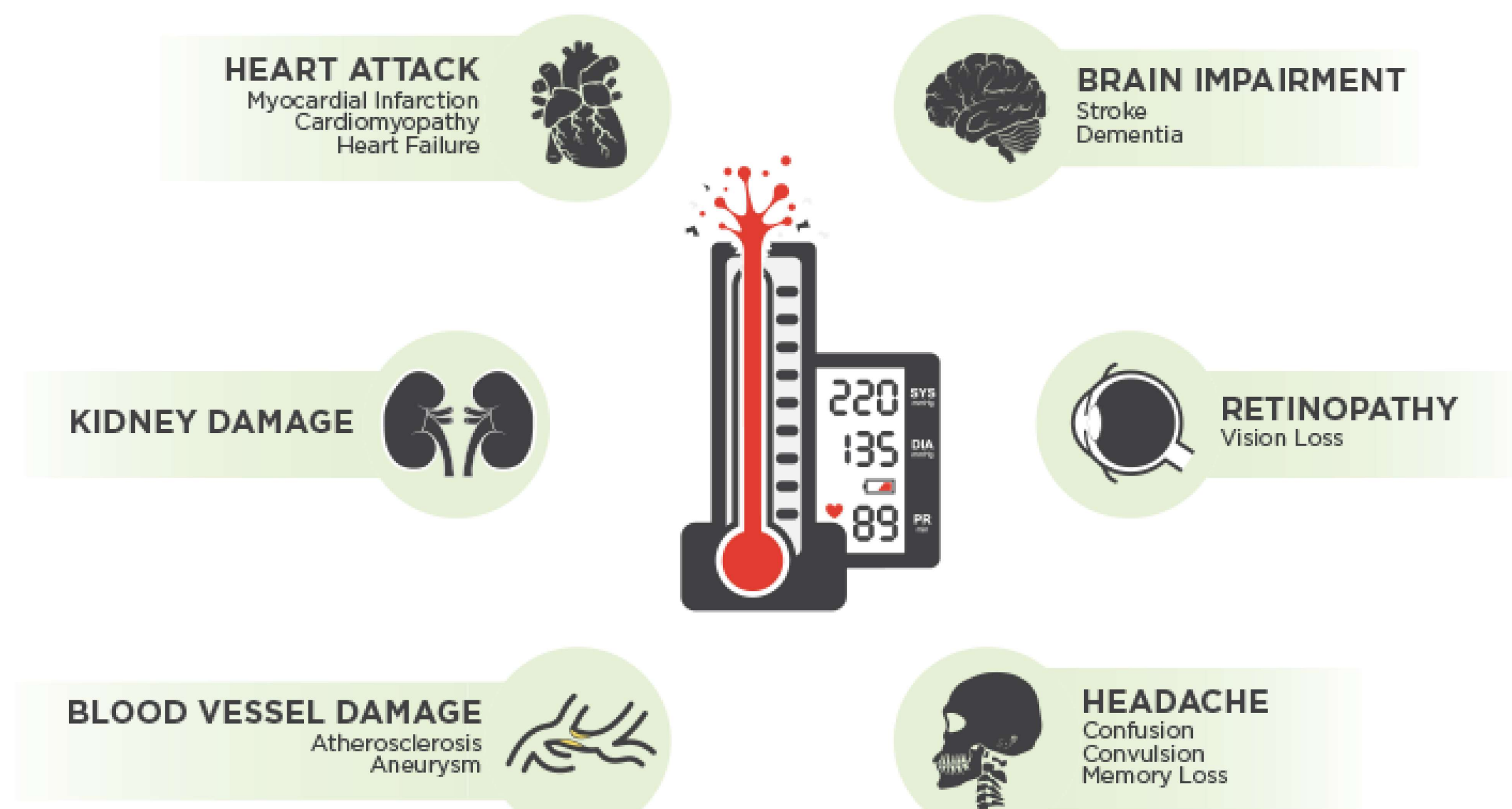
When do I start taking medications?

What blood pressure readings should I aim for?

References

Why is it important to treat high blood pressure?

High blood pressure (BP), or hypertension, is very dangerous if left untreated. It can lead to serious cardiovascular complications, which may result in death. The possible complications that can result from untreated high BP include:



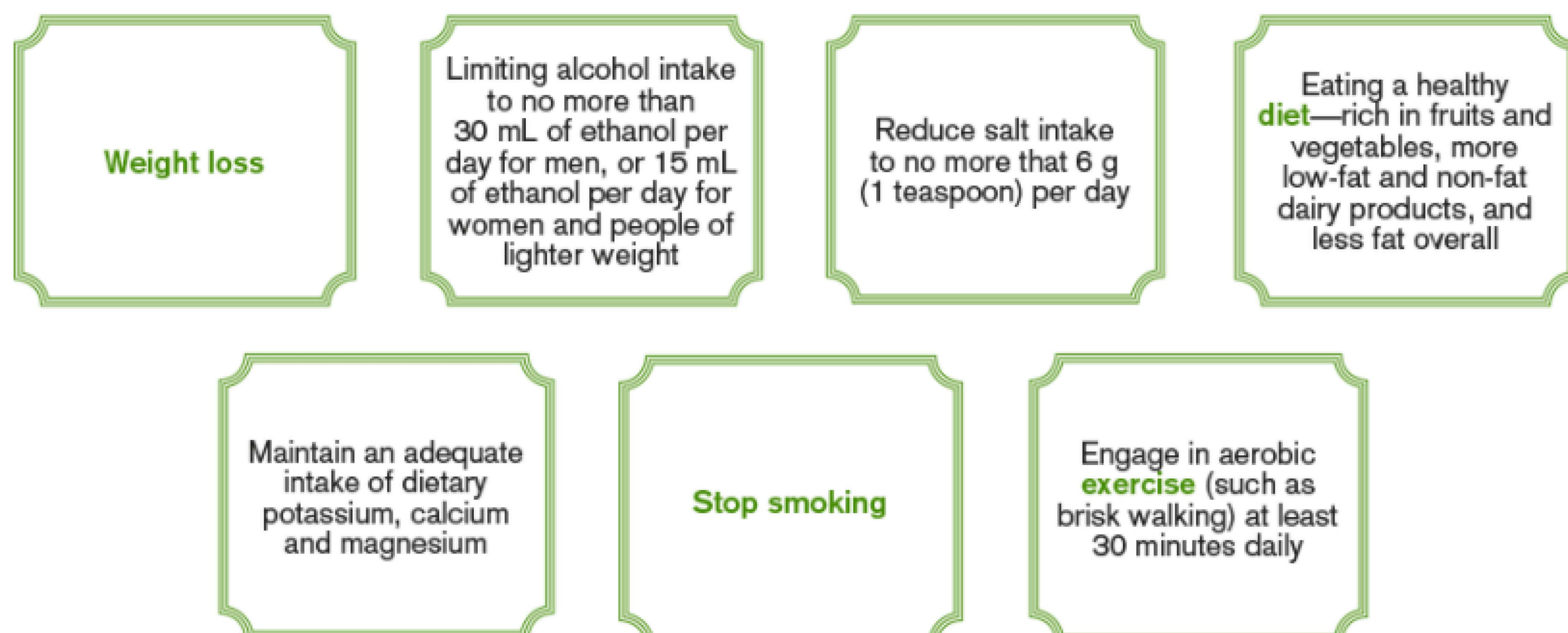
Your risk of developing these complications increases even more if the following risk factors apply to you:

- Older age
- Male gender
- Overweight or obese
- Smoker
- Have **high cholesterol**
- Have **diabetes**
- Physically inactive

How can I keep my blood pressure under control?



The first step in managing high blood pressure (BP) is lifestyle modifications. In some people, the right lifestyle changes can successfully control BP levels and delay or reduce the need for medication. The following recommendations can reduce systolic BP^{2,3}:

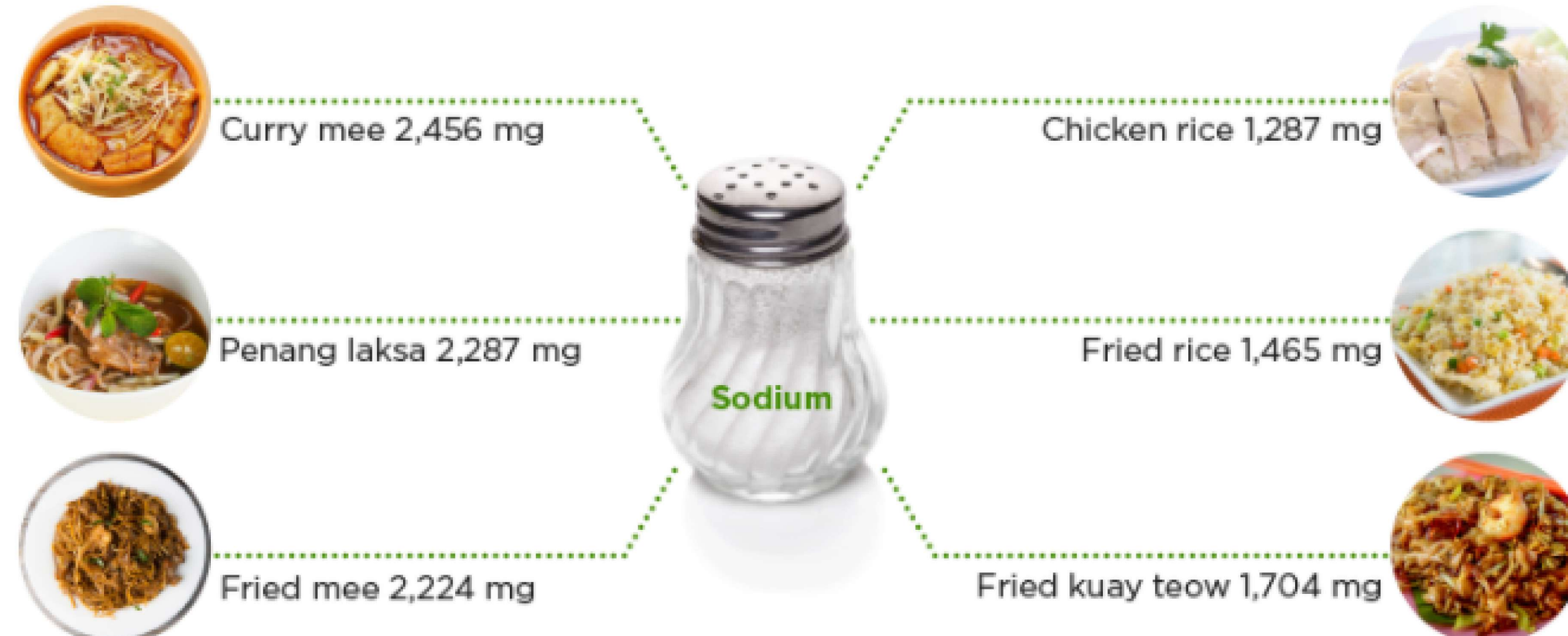


What kind of food can I eat if I have high blood pressure

Having high blood pressure (BP) means one should be careful about the food choices one makes, but this does not mean that your dietary pattern is limited to bland, boring food. You can enjoy your meals by making several wise choices when deciding what to eat:



1. Keep your salt intake low.⁴ A good way to ensure this is by avoiding processed foods and choosing fresh vegetables, fruits, meat and seafood. Instant noodles and popular snacks such as deli meat, frozen pizza, fruit and vegetable juices, and canned soup usually have high salt content.⁵ The Malaysian Dietitians' Association recommends a daily intake of salt of 2,000 mg or one teaspoon.⁶



Source: What's in Your Mee Goreng? Calorie, Fat & Sodium in Everyday Malaysian Favourites⁶

2. Eat more fruits, vegetables and grains. Also include lean meats, poultry and fish, as well as low- or non-fat dairy products in your diet. These and other tips can be found in the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan that is designed to help treat and prevent high BP.⁷



3. A safe guide to follow is to avoid condiments that go along with food, such as *asam* on cut fruits, dressings on salad, soy sauce and ketchup among others.⁸



When do I start taking medications?

Those with pre-hypertension (120–139/80–89 mmHg) can achieve blood pressure (BP) lowering through lifestyle changes

- If you fall into this category, you should visit your doctor on a 6–12 monthly basis. This is to monitor your BP and to detect and treat high BP as early as possible if it develops
- If you have diabetes, chronic kidney disease or prior heart conditions, medications need to be started if your BP is above 130/80 mmHg

Stage I hypertension (140–159/90–99 mmHg)

- Your doctor will decide on initiating drug treatment based on your cardiovascular risk. If your risk is found to be medium or high, drug treatment will be initiated

Stage II and III hypertension (≥160/100 mmHg)

- Drug treatment is immediately started for patients in these categories
- Patients will usually be given a combination of two or more drugs, accompanied with lifestyle changes to bring down BP

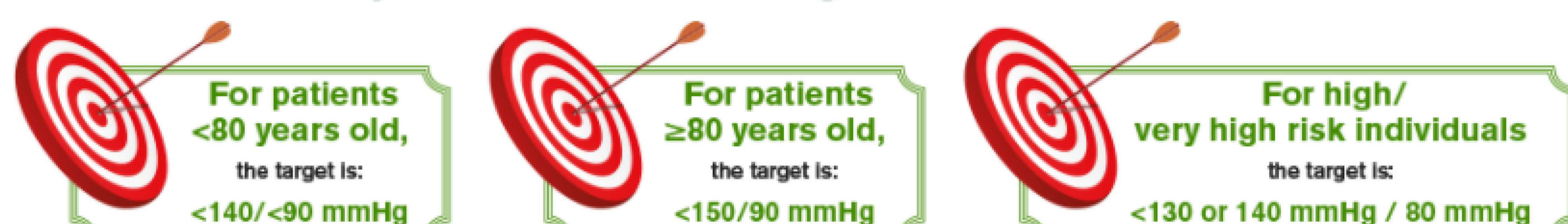


What are the types of antihypertensive medications available?⁹

Several medications are available for high BP treatment:

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|--|--|---|
| Diuretics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sometimes called water pills that help the kidneys to eliminate sodium and water from the body• Often results in increased urination | Beta blockers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help open blood vessels, causing your heart to beat slower and with less force | Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help the blood vessels relax by blocking the formation of a natural chemical that narrows blood vessels |
| Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help the blood vessels to relax by blocking the action of the natural chemical that narrows blood vessels | Calcium channel blockers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help relax the blood vessel muscles• If you are taking this medication, talk to your doctor about avoiding certain foods such as grapefruit juice | Renin inhibitors <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help slow down the production of an enzyme called renin• This medication should not be taken with ACE inhibitors or ARBs |

What blood pressure readings should I aim for?



References

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