



**CHECK  
CHANGE  
CONTROL**

**it**

**YOUR HEART DEPENDS ON IT**

**HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND  
HIGH CHOLESTEROL**

A Guide to Cardiovascular Health  
For You and Your Loved Ones

A photograph of a middle-aged Black man sitting in a wheelchair in a hospital. He is wearing a light blue hospital gown and is looking back over his shoulder towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred hospital hallway. The bottom half of the image has a solid blue overlay.

I had a stroke and woke  
up in the hospital. They told me

I had high blood pressure. – Robert, 43

# CHECK IT. CHANGE IT. CONTROL IT.

**African-American men are at high risk for cardiovascular disease** – diseases of the heart and blood vessels (like arteries and veins). Cardiovascular disease can lead to heart attacks and stroke.

**Heart disease is a leading cause of death among African-American men; nationally, African-American men have a higher risk of dying from stroke before age 65 compared to other groups.**

- In Ohio, African-American men are 53 percent more likely to die from stroke than any other group.
- African-American stroke survivors are more likely to become disabled and have difficulties with activities of daily living.

**High blood pressure and high cholesterol are major risk factors for cardiovascular disease.**

- African Americans have the highest rate of high blood pressure of all groups and tend to develop it at a younger age, even in their teens.
- Nearly 45 percent of African-American men have borderline-to-high cholesterol.



High blood pressure and high cholesterol can't be cured, but they are manageable conditions. First, you need to know where you stand.

If you CHECK IT, you can CHANGE IT and CONTROL IT. **Your life and your loved ones depend on it.**

## CHECK IT.

Cardiovascular disease happens over many years. It can be a silent killer, because the high blood pressure and high cholesterol that are primary risk factors don't have symptoms. Don't ignore how high blood pressure and high cholesterol may be damaging your health. Instead, CHECK IT.

### High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is a condition where the force of the blood against your artery walls is high enough that it may cause serious health problems. For yourself and your loved ones, be safe: visit your doctor to find out your blood pressure numbers – even if you feel fine.

Two numbers make up a blood pressure measurement, for example, 149/96 (149 over 96). A simple blood pressure check will tell you whether you have normal blood pressure, pre-hypertension or high blood pressure.

Normal Blood Pressure	Less than 120 over less than 80
Pre-hypertension	120 to 139 over 80 to 89
High Blood Pressure	140 or higher over 90 or higher

### High Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance in your blood. Too much cholesterol can build up in the walls of your arteries and cause damage over time: arteries narrow and blood flow to the heart slows down or becomes blocked. Eventually, this causes heart disease and can lead to a heart attack.

Like high blood pressure, high cholesterol itself does not cause symptoms. If you don't have your cholesterol levels checked, you won't know if it is harming your health.

See your doctor to get a simple blood test that measures cholesterol.

**Hypertension** is another name for high blood pressure.



### RISK FACTORS

Risk factor = A condition that increases your chance of getting a disease.

**High blood pressure** is a risk factor for:

- Stroke
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Blindness
- Dementia

**High cholesterol** is a risk factor for:

- Heart disease
- Metabolic syndrome (a condition that increases your chance of getting Type 2 diabetes)
- Hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis)

## CHANGE IT.

If you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or both, partner with your doctor to improve your numbers. If your numbers are normal, adopting or maintaining a healthy lifestyle can prevent you from developing them in the future. Either way, ask your family for their support.

### Adopt a Healthy Lifestyle

Enjoying a healthy lifestyle is the best way to prevent getting high blood pressure and high cholesterol. And if you already have one of these conditions, doing things that are healthier for you is just as important as taking medication your doctor may have prescribed.

### Here's What You Need to Do:

- **Eat Healthy:** More fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables; less salt, sweets and fat; smaller portions
- **Be Active:** 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week
- **Don't Smoke:** Check out successful programs to kick the habit for good; if you don't smoke, don't start
- **Drink Less or No Alcohol:** No more than 2 drinks per day

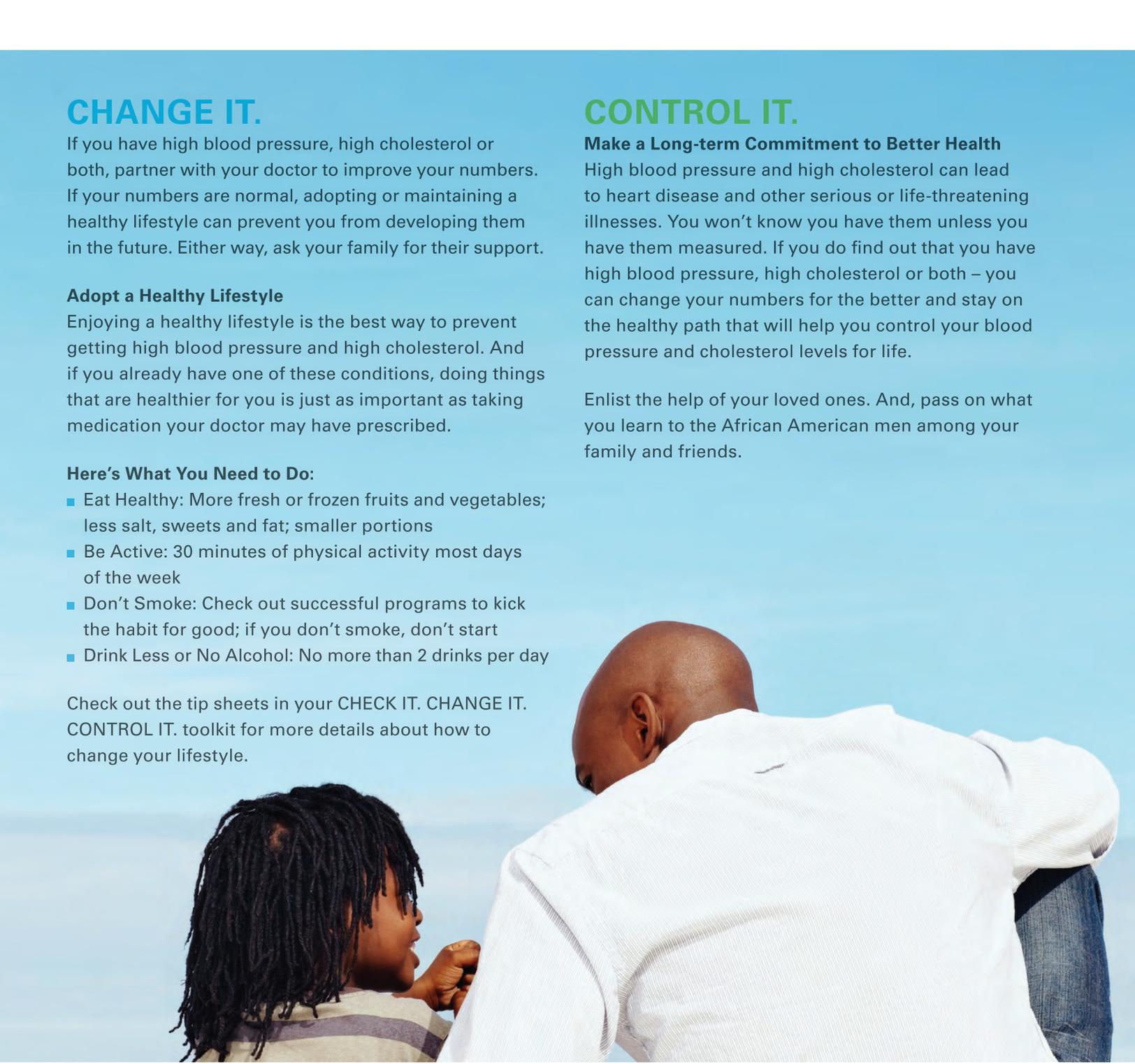
Check out the tip sheets in your CHECK IT. CHANGE IT. CONTROL IT. toolkit for more details about how to change your lifestyle.

## CONTROL IT.

### Make a Long-term Commitment to Better Health

High blood pressure and high cholesterol can lead to heart disease and other serious or life-threatening illnesses. You won't know you have them unless you have them measured. If you do find out that you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or both – you can change your numbers for the better and stay on the healthy path that will help you control your blood pressure and cholesterol levels for life.

Enlist the help of your loved ones. And, pass on what you learn to the African American men among your family and friends.



I feel a real responsibility to be here for my kids and to set a good example: eating healthy, exercising, not smoking or drinking too much. – James, 30

AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
MEN ARE AT HIGH RISK  
FOR HEART DISEASE  
AND STROKE.

SIMPLE TESTS CAN BE  
DONE TO CHECK YOUR  
BLOOD PRESSURE AND  
CHOLESTEROL.

YOU CAN CHANGE THE  
PICTURE AND LEAD  
A HEALTHY LIFE.



**YOUR HEART DEPENDS ON IT**

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This program was created by the Ohio Department of Health, in collaboration with Ohio physicians. This publication was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number 5U50DP000739 from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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