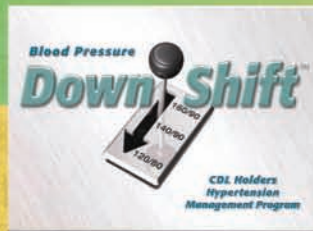


DRIVERS HEALTH



Sponsored by Blood Pressure (BP) **DOWNSHIFT™**

The Ramp Publishing Group would like to thank the many readers who responded to our first installment of Drivers Health sponsored by *BP DownShift™*. The feedback we received was very positive and many drivers expressed their appreciation for the fact that Ramp Publishing and Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation are taking the lead in providing professional drivers and owner operators with the resources they need to get healthy and live longer lives.

In addition to expressing gratitude and showing interest for what we are doing, many drivers made it clear that they have numerous questions about high blood pressure, how it can affect them, and how it can affect a driver's CDL certification. We will therefore devote this month's Drivers Health to answering some of these basic questions.

First of all, what is blood pressure?

A person's blood pressure is determined by how much blood his or her heart pumps and the resistance caused by how tight that person's arteries may be. A blood pressure reading has two numbers - the first number is the *systolic pressure*, which is the pressure of the blood flow as your heart beats and pushes blood through your body. The second number is the *diastolic pressure*, which is the pressure between heartbeats, as your heart refills with blood.

What is normal blood pressure?

Normal blood pressure is defined as below 120/80 mm Hg.

What is high blood pressure?

High blood pressure, also known as *hypertension*, is diagnosed when a person's blood pressure is consistently 140/90 mm Hg or higher. At this level, the pressure inside the arteries is too strong and may be causing damage to arteries throughout the body. Additionally, hypertension can significantly increase the risk of damage to the heart, kidneys and eyes.

Who is at risk for high blood pressure?

High blood pressure can happen to anyone. In fact, 1 in 3 adults in the U.S. has high blood pressure. Professional drivers are at increased risk for developing high blood pressure because of their lifestyle. The job of a driver is stressful, and life on the road makes it challenging to maintain healthy eating and exercise habits. Drivers need to be especially careful about monitoring and treating their blood pressure.

Other groups with increased risk for high blood pressure include:

- People with blood relatives who have high blood pressure, like a father, mother or sibling
- Men over the age of 55
- Women over the age of 65
- People who get little or no regular physical activity
- People who smoke
- People who are overweight
- People with high cholesterol
- People with diabetes

BLOOD PRESSURE RANGES	
normal	below 120/80 mmHg
prehypertension	120/80 to 139/89 mmHg
stage 1 hypertension	140/90 to 159/99 mmHg
stage 2 hypertension	160/100 mmHg or above

What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

Unfortunately, most people with hypertension have no symptoms. In fact, of the approximately 65 million Americans who have high blood pressure, it is estimated that only about one-third of them are aware that they have it.

Untreated high blood pressure may lead to complications and symptoms that include: blurred vision, dizziness, headaches, facial flushing and palpitations. Symptoms of *severe hypertension* can advance to nausea, irregular or rapid heartbeat, vomiting, a buzzing noise in the ear, chest pain, and shortness of breath.

How does blood pressure affect my CDL?

• High blood pressure can cause a driver to lose his or her CDL. **BOTTOM LINE FOR PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS** is that your blood pressure needs to be below 140/90.

If a driver has high blood pressure and/or is being medicated for it, he or she will need to be recertified more frequently, depending on the stage of the hypertension.

• **Stage 1 (BP is 140/90-159/99)** - You may be certified for one year. At recertification:

- ◀ if your BP is equal to or less than 140/90 you may be certified for one year;
- ◀ if your BP is greater than 140/90 but less than 160/100, a one-time certificate for 3 months can be issued.

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- **Stage 2 (BP is 160/100-179/109)** - You should be treated and a one-time certificate for 3-month certification can be issued.
- ◀ Once you have reduced your BP to equal to or less than 140/90, you may be recertified annually thereafter.

• **Stage 3 (BP equal to or greater than 180/110)** - You will not be certified until your BP is reduced to 140/90 or less, and then you may be recertified every 6 months.

We began publishing Drivers Health each month in both *OTR* and *Pro Trucker* magazines in order to address the problem of poor health and premature death among over-the-road truckers. These monthly articles are designed to help educate drivers on the dangers of high blood pressure and to provide professional drivers and owner operators with the resources you need to get healthy and live longer lives. Now that we've answered some of your fundamental questions about what high blood pressure is and how it can affect your CDL, next month we'll begin a discussion on how drivers can lower their blood pressure and get on the road to good health.

One of the very best resources for professional drivers is *Blood Pressure (BP) DownShift™*, a program from Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation. We recommend that all drivers with questions about high blood pressure visit the *BP DownShift™* website, located at www.DriversHealth.com or call 1-877-2DOWNSHIFT.

SOURCES

1 Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration: Medical Advisory Criteria for Evaluation under 49CFRPart 391.41. Available at <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/administration/medical.htm>. Accessed March 1, 2007.

2 Novartis Announces BP DownShift, Free Educational Program to Help Professional Drivers Get Their High Blood Pressure Under Control. BP DownShift Press Release, April 27, 2006, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, <http://www.novartis.com>.

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