How Low Should You Go?

New blood pressure goals raise questions, especially for men.

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Last year, when a committee of experts raised blood pressure targets for folks with hypertension, age 60 or older, many people became confused.

These doctors said the highest acceptable reading was about 150/90 (read as “150 over 90”). This reading compares with the earlier stricter standard of 140/90.

In blood pressure readings, the higher top number (the systolic reading) measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats. The lower bottom number (the diastolic reading) measures the pressure in the arteries between heartbeats.

But in older men with more health conditions, forcing down blood pressure with drugs may put them at risk of more side effects from these meds. That’s why the new recommendations might be helpful—they allow for a higher number.

The reason doctors try to control their patients’ blood pressure is to prevent strokes. But Lewis A. Lipsitz, MD, the chief of geriatrics at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, says it might not be necessary to push the numbers down to meet the older standards.

After all, why risk paying unnecessary costs if you don’t have to?

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/blood-pressure-goals-26118-1105