

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE | WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure is the force of blood against artery walls as it circulates through the body. Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day, but it can cause health problems if it stays high for a long time.



High blood pressure can lead to heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death in the United States.

ARE YOU AT RISK?

Factors that **can** be controlled:

- Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Being obese or overweight
- Unhealthy diet (high in sodium, low in potassium, and drinking too much alcohol)
- Physical inactivity



Factors difficult to control:

- Family history of high blood pressure
- Race/ethnicity
- Increasing age
- Gender (males)
- Chronic kidney disease
- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Socioeconomic status and psychosocial stress



What are the signs and symptoms?

High blood pressure usually has no warning signs or symptoms, so many people don't realize they have it. That's why it's important to visit your doctor regularly. Be sure to talk with your doctor about having your blood pressure checked.

How is high blood pressure diagnosed?

Your doctor measures your blood pressure by wrapping an inflatable cuff with a pressure gauge around your arm to squeeze the blood vessels. Then he or she listens to your pulse with a stethoscope while releasing air from the cuff. The gauge measures the pressure in the blood vessels when the heart beats (systolic) and when it rests (diastolic).

How is it treated?

If you have high blood pressure, your doctor may prescribe medication to treat it. Lifestyle changes you can make to the reduce risk factors listed above, can be just as important as taking medicines. Talk with your doctor about the best ways to reduce your risk for high blood pressure.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/index.htm>
2. American Heart Association: <http://www.americanheart.org>
3. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

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WHAT BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS ARE HEALTHY?

To determine whether your blood pressure is normal, your doctor examines your systolic and diastolic pressures, which the gauge measures in millimeters of mercury (abbreviated as mmHg).

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

What to do if you have High Blood Pressure.

- Take your medicine as prescribed by your doctor
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight
- Eat a healthy diet
- Don't smoke
- Avoid food high in sodium. Check the nutrition labels on prepared and packaged foods and keep intake at 1,500 mg per day or less.
- Be physically active. The goal should be 90 to 150 minutes of exercise every week.
- If possible, monitor your blood pressure at home.



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Tips for monitoring your blood pressure at home.

- Every time you check your blood pressure at home, use the same blood pressure equipment to ensure accurate results.
- Avoid smoking, caffeine, and exercise 30 minutes before blood pressure measurement.
- Empty your bladder before measurement.
- Sit quietly for 5 minutes before measuring your blood pressure and do not talk when measuring your blood pressure.
- Sit comfortably with your back supported and both feet on the floor.
- Ensure the arm you intend to use for the measurement is placed at heart level.
- It is recommended to take 2 blood pressure readings, 1 minute apart each morning before medications and evening before supper.
- Keep a record of all blood pressure readings and take it with you to your doctor's visit.