

Understanding High Blood Pressure

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is a measure of how hard your blood pushes against the walls of your arteries. High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is a disease in which a person has elevated blood pressure. If this pressure stays high over time, it can damage your body in many ways.

What are the signs and symptoms of high blood pressure?

High blood pressure is known as the “silent killer” because you rarely feel any symptoms until it has already damaged your body. That’s why it’s important to get your blood pressure checked regularly.

Signs and symptoms of high blood pressure include:

- Blurry vision
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath

How do you prevent high blood pressure?

You can prevent high blood pressure through simple lifestyle changes. Remember to:

- Eat a healthy diet that includes lots of fruits, vegetables, fish, whole grains, and reduced fat dairy products.
- Eat less salt (less than 1,500mg per day)
- Exercise at least 30 minutes each day.
- Lose extra weight.
- Limit alcoholic drinks to one per day.
- Take medications, if prescribed by your doctor.
- Avoid or stop smoking (call 1-800-NO-BUTTS to get information on how to quit).
- Find ways to manage your stress.



Risk Factors

The following may increase your chances of getting hypertension:

- Family history
- Age
- Smoking
- Overweight and obesity
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Race (African American, Native American, Latino)

Blood Pressure Levels

Normal: Less than 120/80mm Hg

Pre-hypertension: 120/80mm Hg to 139/89mm Hg

Hypertension: 140/90mm Hg or higher

How is high blood pressure treated?

If lifestyle changes are not enough to lower your blood pressure, your doctor may prescribe medication. If you are on medication, it’s very important to take it as prescribed, even if you’re feeling well.

High blood pressure can lead to heart attack, congestive heart failure, vision loss, kidney disease, stroke, and other health problems, if not treated.

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