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High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

1. What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood against your artery walls as it circulates through your 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, stroke, kidney failure and damage eyes

2. Are you at risk?

Anyone, including children, can develop it

3. What are the risk factors?

• Non modifiable risk factors

Several factors that are beyond your control can increase your risk for high blood pressure. These include your age, sex, and race or ethnicity.

• Modifiable risk factors

But you can work to reduce your risk by eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, being physically active and avoiding alcohol

3. 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. Very high blood pressure (malignant HTN) can cause headaches, vision problems, nausea, and vomiting.

In Malignant hypertension blood pressure rises very fast, can also cause these symptoms. Malignant high blood pressure is a medical emergency

4. 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. The first (systolic) number represents the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart beats. The second (diastolic) number represents the pressure in your vessels when your heart rests between beats.

5. What are the Blood Pressure Levels?

Normal

Systolic: less than 120 mmHg

Diastolic: less than 80 mmHg

At risk (pre hypertension)

Systolic: 120–139 mmHg

Diastolic: 80–89 mmHg

High

Systolic: 140 mmHg or higher

Diastolic: 90 mmHg or higher

Your blood pressure may also rise if you are not very active, you don't eat enough potassium and calcium, or you have a condition called insulin resistance.

6. How is high blood pressure diagnosed?

For your doctor to confirm that you have high blood pressure, your blood pressure must be at least 140/90 on three or more separate occasions. It is usually measured 1 to 2 weeks apart.

You may have to check your blood pressure at home if there is reason to think the readings in the doctor's office aren't accurate.

You may have what is called white-coat hypertension, which is blood pressure that goes up just because you're at the doctor's office.

7. How is it treated?

- Treatment depends on how high your blood pressure is, whether you have other health problems such as diabetes, and whether any organs have already been damaged.
- You can help lower your blood pressure by making healthy changes in your lifestyle. If those lifestyle changes don't work, you may also need to take pills. Either way, you will need to control your BP throughout your life
- If you have pre hypertension, your doctor will likely recommend lifestyle changes. These may include losing extra weight, exercising, limiting alcohol, cutting back on salt, quitting smoking, and eating a low fat diet that includes more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low fat dairy foods
- If you have high blood pressure without any organ damage or other risk factors for heart disease, your doctor may recommend that you take medicine in addition to making lifestyle changes
- If you have high blood pressure and have some organ damage or other risk factors for heart disease, you may need to try various combinations of medicines in addition to making big lifestyle changes
- Most people take more than one pill for high blood pressure. Work with your doctor to find the right pill or combination of pills that will cause the fewest side effects
- It can be hard to remember to take pills when you have no symptoms. But your blood pressure will go back up if you don't take your medicine. Make your pill schedule as simple as you can. Plan times to take them when you are doing other things, like eating a meal or getting ready for bed.

BLOOD PRESSURE MONITORING AT HOME

Why should I measure my blood pressure at home and keep a record of it?

Measuring your blood pressure at home and keeping a record of the measurements will show you and your doctor how much your blood pressure changes during the day. Your doctor can use the measurements to see how well your medicine is working to control your high blood pressure. Also, measuring your own blood pressure is a good way to take part in managing your health.

What equipment do I need to measure my blood pressure?

To measure your blood pressure at home, you can use either an aneroid monitor or a digital monitor. The aneroid monitor has a dial gauge that is read by looking at a pointer. The cuff is inflated by hand, by squeezing a rubber bulb. Digital monitors have either manual or automatic cuffs. The blood pressure reading flashes on a small screen. Choose the type of monitor that best suits your needs.

What do I need to do before I measure my blood pressure?

- Don't use caffeine, alcohol or tobacco products for 30 minutes before measuring your blood pressure.
- Pass urine before measuring your blood pressure.
- Rest for 3 to 5 minutes before measuring your blood pressure. Do not talk.
- Sit in a comfortable position, with your legs and ankles uncrossed and your back supported.
- Place your arm, raised to the level of your heart, on a table or a desk, and sit still.
- Wrap the correctly sized cuff smoothly and snugly around the upper part of your bare arm. The cuff should fit snugly, but there should be enough room for you to slip one fingertip under the cuff.
- Be certain that the bottom edge of the cuff is 1 inch above the crease of your elbow.

What does my blood pressure reading mean?

Normal blood pressure is 120/80 or lower. High blood pressure is 140/90 or higher. If your blood pressure is between 120/80 and 140/90, you have something called "prehypertension" (you are in the beginning stages and at risk of high blood pressure). Only your doctor can tell you whether you have high blood pressure. Most doctors will check your blood pressure several times on different days before deciding that you have high blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure or prehypertension, you need to check your blood pressure regularly and keep in touch with your family doctor.

	Systolic (first number)	Diastolic (second number)
Normal	Less than 120	Less than 80
Prehypertension	120–139	80–89
High blood pressure: Stage 1*	140–159	90–99
High blood pressure: Stage 2	160 or higher	100 or over

**If you have diabetes or kidney disease, high blood pressure ranges may be lower than it is for other people. Talk to your doctor about what is considered high blood pressure for you.*

Hypotension, or low blood pressure, happens when your systolic pressure is consistently (several blood pressure readings over several days) below 90 or 25 points below your normal reading. Hypotension can be a sign of something serious such as shock, a life threatening condition. Contact your doctor immediately if you are dizzy or fainting.

