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# Hypertension

High Blood Pressure – “The Silent Killer”



GRACE VISITING NURSES

*Recent surveys indicate 1 in 3 U.S. adults have high blood pressure. In fact, many people live for years with it without knowing. That's why it's called "The Silent Killer". The only sure way to tell you have hypertension is to have your blood pressure checked.*

## Table of Contents

Hypertension.....	3
What is hypertension?.....	3
Definition	3
Concerns of High Blood Pressure	3
Types of Hypertension .....	4
Risk factors.....	5
Signs and Symptoms of Hypertension .....	5
Diagnostic Tests.....	6
Treatment .....	6
Diet	6
Weight & Lifestyle changes	8
Medications	9
Resources .....	10

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Our services offered include:

- ✚ Registered Nurses
- ✚ Licensed Vocational Nurses
- ✚ Dietitians
- ✚ Physical, Occupational, and Speech Therapy
- ✚ Pediatric Nursing
- ✚ Telemonitoring
- ✚ Wound Care/Wound Vac
- ✚ Anodyne Therapy
- ✚ Ventilators/Trach Care
- ✚ Central Line Care
- ✚ PICC Line Care
- ✚ IV/TPN Therapy
- ✚ IVIG/Respigam

## Resources

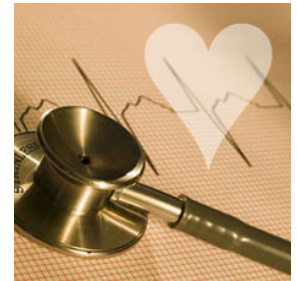
Doctors  
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DASH diet  
American Heart Association

## Hypertension

### What is hypertension?

#### Definition

The heart pumps blood enriched with oxygen and nutrients throughout the body. The amount of pressure that is exerted on the walls of the vessels (arteries) is measured in millimeters of mercury and is your blood pressure. Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80. The top number (systolic) is the amount of pressure that is pushed through the arteries when the heart beats. The bottom number (diastolic) is the amount of pressure in the arteries when the heart rests. Blood pressure readings that are higher are called hypertension (high blood pressure). If no cause can be found for elevated blood pressure then it is considered essential hypertension. 90-95% of most people develop this type of hypertension. Blood pressure varies during the day and is affected by exercise, rest, emotions.



#### Concerns of High Blood Pressure

With hypertension your heart has to work more to get blood through the arteries. This can lead to bleeding of the vessels causing strokes. As elevated blood pressure continues, it causes

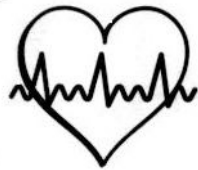


the arteries to become hard and narrow, limiting the blood that reaches the organs of our bodies, such as kidney, and eyes. This narrowing also irritates the walls of the arteries causing a fatty buildup on the walls leading to atherosclerosis which can cause heart attacks.

This buildup can break off causing clots to circulate in the body which can lead to strokes or heart attacks. Organ damage can also occur when the artery is completely blocked with this buildup. The muscles of the heart also have to work harder and become thicker. This impairs the heart's ability to pump efficiently and can lead to heart failure. Worsening problems can occur the longer hypertension is left untreated and the higher the blood pressure readings.

### Types of Hypertension

- Prehypertension: Blood pressure readings between 120/80 to 139/89
- Stage I: Blood pressure readings between 140/90 to 159/99
- Stage 2: Blood pressure readings over 160/100.



For people age 50 and older, it is common for the systolic (top number) to become elevated, which can lead to heart attacks.

- Secondary Hypertension: Elevated blood pressure caused by other diseases, such as diabetes, kidney disease, adrenal gland disease, thyroid problems, or pregnancy
- Primary Pulmonary Hypertension: Once blood is pumped into the body by the heart, it then goes back to the heart (right side) where it is pumped to the lungs to get a new supply of oxygen. Increased blood pressure in the arteries of the lungs causes the right side of the heart to work harder becoming thicker. Symptoms appear as the disease progresses.

- Try relaxation and slow breathing exercises
- Limit caffeine which can cause a temporary increase in blood pressure

### Medications

Your doctor may prescribe medication to help control hypertension. You may be on more than 1 medication. Be sure to follow your doctor's instructions for taking your medication, do not stop or change dosage. Read literature that comes with your medications about possible side effects and inform your doctor of any side effects.

### Types of blood pressure medicines:

- Diuretics: "fluid pills" eliminate excess salt and water from the body reducing blood pressure
- Beta Blockers: lowers heart rate and workload of heart reducing blood pressure
- Vasodilators, Calcium Channel blockers, ACE inhibitors, ARBs: relax blood vessels to reduce blood pressure

### Monitor your blood pressure

Your doctor may want you to keep a record of your blood pressure. You can monitor your blood pressure with a stethoscope and sphygmomanometer (inflatable cuff) or a digital blood pressure unit. When checking your blood pressure, be seated for a few minutes before checking. If you get an unusual reading very high or very low, use the 2 out of 3 rule. Wait 5 minutes between readings and check your blood pressure 3 times. 2 readings are usually close in range.



juice or milk, trade a slice of white bread for a slice of whole grain bread.

### Weight & Lifestyle changes

You may be able to control your hypertension with these changes.

- If you are overweight, lose weight - even a 5 pound weight loss can lower your blood pressure.
  - Check with your doctor about a reduced calorie diet
- Include exercise in your day - 30 minutes/day several times a week
  - Example: brisk walking, swimming, bicycling, gardening, take a gym class. Exercise should increase heart rate and breathing. Moderate exercise will break a sweat. Make small changes by taking stairs instead of elevator, parking at end of parking lot when out shopping to increase walking. Always check with your doctor before starting an exercise routine
- Limit alcohol use
  - Female no more than 1 drink/day, Male no more than 2 drinks/day
  - 1 drink equals 12 ounces beer, 5 ounces wine or 1&1/2 ounces liquor
- Stop Smoking
- Reduce stress



### Risk factors

Factors that you can control are:

- Smoking
- Overweight
- High salt diet
- Alcohol abuse
- Use of certain street drugs



Factors out of your control are:

- Race: increased risk in African population
- Gender: Men, however after age 75, women are at higher risk
- Heredity: risk increases with diagnosis of hypertension in parents
- Age: increased risk as we age
- Side effects of certain medications

### Signs and Symptoms of Hypertension



- Dizziness
- Easily fatigued
- Headaches
- Blurred vision
- Nose bleeds
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Stroke

Most troublesome is that you may not experience any symptoms with high blood pressure, recommended that you have your blood pressure checked yearly. If you have severe headache, shortness of breath, chest pain or weakness on 1 side of the body seek immediate medical help.

## Diagnostic Tests

Monitor your blood pressure. If your blood pressure is elevated at your doctor's visit, it is usually rechecked at a follow-up visit to confirm that you do have hypertension.

Often the physician may order urine/blood tests, chest x-ray, EKG to find possible other causes for elevated blood pressure. A medical history is important to look for any of the risk factors.

## Treatment

### Diet

Limiting salt intake in your diet can reduce high blood pressure. The recommended salt intake should be about 1500-2400mg (1 teaspoon) a day. Be sure to check with your doctor about salt restriction.

Be a label reader on all prepackaged and canned good. To reduce salt intake it shouldn't be more than 5% of daily requirement based on a 2000 calorie diet. Use salt free herb substitutes in place of salt when cooking or seasoning foods.

Follow the DASH diet to potentially lower your blood pressure.



Follow the DASH diet which limits fats, cholesterol, red meat, sweets and encourages whole grains, fruits, vegetables, poultry, fish, nuts and low fat/fat free dairy.

## Guidelines: Based on 2000 calories/day

- Grains/ grain products: 7-8 servings/day
  - Example: 1 slice whole grain bread, 1 cup cold cereal, ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or cooked cereal
- Vegetables: 4-5 servings/day
  - Example: 1cup raw leafy vegetables, ½ cup cooked vegetables, ½ cup vegetable juice
- Fruit: 4-5 servings/day
  - Example: 1 medium fruit, ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned, 1/4 cup dried, ½ cup fruit juice
- Dairy (low fat or fat free): 2-3 servings/day
  - Examples: 1 cup milk, 1 cup yogurt, 1 & ½ ounces cheese
- Lean meats, poultry, fish: 2 or less servings/day
  - Example: skinless chicken, lean meat or fish about 3 ounces each when cooked
- Nuts/Seeds, dried beans: 4-5 servings/week
  - Example: 1/3 cup nuts, 1 tablespoon seeds, ½ cup cooked beans
- Fats/Oils: 2-3 servings/day
  - Example: 1teaspoon soft margarine or oil, 1 tablespoon low fat mayonnaise, 2 tablespoons low fat salad dressing
- Sweets: 5 servings/week
  - Example: 1 tablespoon sugar or jelly/jam, ½ cup sorbet, 1 glass lemonade



Make diet changes gradually so it doesn't overwhelm you. Try substituting a high fat snack with a piece of fruit or a soda with