

What is High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure is when your blood pressure is higher than normal for an extended period of time. Another name for high blood pressure is hypertension. If you have recently been diagnosed with hypertension you should take it seriously. For 85% to 95% of people with high blood pressure, the cause is not known. While high blood pressure is a serious condition, there are many lifestyle changes and treatment options available to help lower blood pressure. Odds are good that many people will have high blood pressure in their lifetime. In fact, 73 million American adults have high blood pressure. Even though high blood pressure is quite common, it is still a condition that should be monitored closely by a doctor.

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls. It is written as two numbers. The top, systolic, number is the pressure when the heart beats. The bottom, diastolic, number, is the pressure when the heart rests between beats. Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80. If a person has a blood pressure reading between 120/80 and 139/89 this is called prehypertension. Stage 1 hypertension is when you numbers are 140-159 over 90-99. Levels above that are considered Stage 2 hypertension.

The Stages of Hypertension

Blood pressure (mm Hg)	Stage
Less than 120/80	Normal
120/80 to 139/89	Prehypertension
140/90 to 159/99	Stage 1 hypertension
160/100 and higher	Stage 2 hypertension

Who is at higher risk?

- ♣ People with relatives that have high blood pressure
- ♣ African Americans
- ♣ People with high salt in take
- ♣ Overweight people
- ♣ People with anxiety, intense anger, & suppressed expression of anger
- ♣ People with kidney disease, gout or diabetes
- ♣ People who consume to much alcohol
- ♣ Women who take birth control pills
- ♣ People over the age of 35



What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

Some people may experience a headache or vision problems when their blood pressure is elevated. People with high blood pressure often show no symptoms until it is extremely high. Remember that if left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to serious complications.

How is high blood pressure diagnosed?

High blood pressure is diagnosed by a doctor or nurse using a simple and painless test and is usually measured when you are sitting or lying down. Most doctors will check your blood pressure several times on different days before deciding that you have high blood pressure. You can also get your blood pressure measured at a pharmacy or you can purchase a monitor to be used at home.

What can I do about it?

People with high blood pressure are urged to limit their intake of salt and caffeine, be more physically active by exercising at least 30 minutes a day, quit smoking and generally lead less stressful lives. Know your medication and take it the way your doctor tells you. Never stop taking your medicine until directed by your doctor. You should limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women or two drinks a day for men.

What can untreated high blood pressure lead to?

- ♣ Stroke
- ♣ Heart attack, angina or both
- ♣ Heart failure
- ♣ Kidney failure
- ♣ Peripheral arterial disease
- ♣ Damage of small blood vessels in the eyes

Where can I get support?

Someone in your life who understands your condition and why you have to make lifestyle changes is probably your best support system. Share your feelings with people you love and get their support. You might check to see if there is a support group in your area.

