High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

High blood pressure is a common condition in which the force of the blood against your artery walls is high enough that it may eventually cause health problems, such as heart disease.

Blood pressure is determined by the amount of blood your heart pumps and the amount of resistance to blood flow in your arteries. The more blood your heart pumps and the narrower your arteries, the higher your blood pressure.

You may not know you have high blood pressure. Some people with high blood pressure may experience headaches or dizzy spells, but not always. Your doctor will check your blood pressure during office visits using an inflatable arm cuff and a pressure-measuring gauge.

There is not one specific thing that causes high blood pressure but there are things that make the risk higher:

- Age - The risk of high blood pressure increases in middle age for men and after menopause for women.
- Race - High blood pressure is more common among African-Americans
- Family history - High blood pressure tends to run in families.
- Being overweight or obese - The more you weigh, the more blood you need to supply oxygen and nutrients throughout your body. As the volume of blood increases, so does the pressure on your artery walls.
- Not being physically active - People who are inactive tend to have higher heart rates. The higher your heart rate the stronger the force on your arteries.
- Using tobacco - Not only does smoking or chewing tobacco immediately raise your blood pressure temporarily, but the chemicals in tobacco can cause your arteries to narrow, increasing your blood pressure. Secondhand smoke also can increase your blood pressure.
- Too much salt (sodium) in your diet - Too much sodium in your diet can cause your body to retain fluid, which increases blood pressure.

Choose fruits and vegetables over unhealthy fatty foods

ADAM.

- Too little potassium in your diet - Potassium helps balance the amount of sodium in your body. If you don't have enough potassium, you may have too much sodium in your blood.
- Drinking too much alcohol - Having more than two drinks a day can raise your blood pressure.
- Stress - High levels of stress can lead to a temporary, but dramatic, increase in blood pressure.
- Certain chronic conditions - Certain chronic conditions also may increase your risk of high blood pressure, including high cholesterol, diabetes, and sleep apnea.

How do I know if my blood pressure is high?

Blood pressure readings have two numbers, for example 140/90 mm Hg, said as 140 over 90.

The top number is the **systolic** blood pressure - The highest pressure when your heart beats and pushes the blood through your arteries. The bottom number is the **diastolic** blood pressure - The lowest pressure between heart beats.

Blood pressure measurements fall into four general categories:

- **Normal blood pressure -** Your blood pressure is normal if is more than 90 over 60 (90/60 mm Hg) and and less than 120 over 80 (120/80 mm Hg).
- **Pre-high blood pressure (prehypertension) -** More than 120 over 80 **(120/80 mm Hg)** and less than 140 over 90 (140/90 mm Hg): **You have a normal blood pressure reading but it is a little higher than it should be, and you should try to lower it or you may develop high blood pressure**
- **High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) -** 140 over 90 (140/90 mm Hg) or higher over a period of time

Your doctor will likely take two to three blood pressure readings each at two or more separate appointments before diagnosing you with high blood pressure. Your doctor may ask you to record your blood pressure at home, too. This is because blood pressure normally changes throughout the day.

How is high blood pressure treated?

- Medication
- Diet - eating healthy foods low in salt (sodium)
- Exercise
- Limiting alcohol
- Stop using tobacco
- Managing stress – try taking deep, breaths to help relax.
- Getting plenty of sleep

Exercising 30 minutes a day can help you lose weight, which can lower blood pressure

slow

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Some information adapted from Mayoclinic.com