

Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

April - Physical Wellness Month

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High blood pressure (also called hypertension) is a serious illness that affects nearly 65 million adults in the United States. High blood pressure is often called a "silent killer" because many people have it but don't know it. Over time, people who do not get treated for high blood pressure can get very sick or even die.

What does high blood pressure do to your body?

High blood pressure can cause life-threatening illnesses like kidney problems, stroke, heart failure, blindness, and heart attacks.

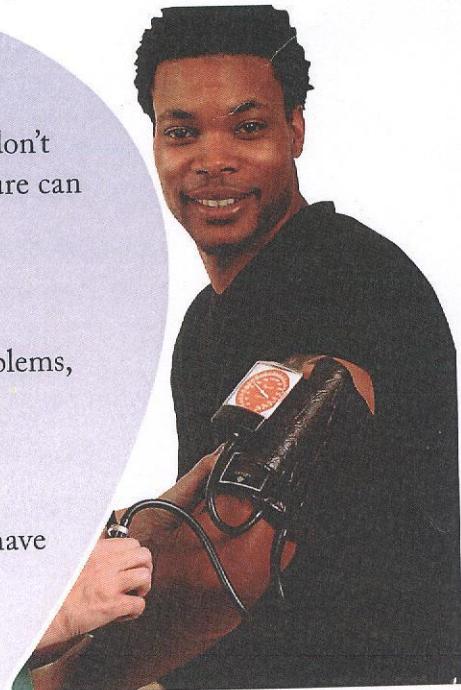
Who is at risk?

Anyone can have high blood pressure. Some people are more likely to have high blood pressure including:

- African Americans
- People over age 55
- People with a family history of high blood pressure

Your chances of having high blood pressure are higher if you:

- Are overweight
- Eat foods high in salt
- Do not get regular exercise
- Smoke
- Drink alcohol heavily



• WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Many people with high blood pressure do not feel sick at first. The only way to know for sure is to get your blood pressure checked by a doctor or other health professional.

Understanding your blood pressure: What do the numbers mean?

When you have your blood pressure taken at the doctor, you are told two numbers like 120/80. Both numbers are important.

The first number is your pressure when your heart beats (systolic pressure). The second number is the pressure when your heart relaxes (diastolic pressure).

Your blood pressure goes up and down during the day, depending on what you are doing. Brief rises in blood pressure are normal, but the higher your blood pressure stays, the higher the risk.

If your blood pressure is often greater than 130/80, you may need treatment. If your blood pressure is greater than 120/80, and you have other risk factors, like diabetes, you may need treatment.

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How is high blood pressure treated?

There are medicines people can take every day to control their high blood pressure. Only your doctor can tell if you need to take medication.

How do I control my high blood pressure?

- Check your blood pressure.
- Take your blood pressure medicine as prescribed by your physician.
- Exercise often.
 - Eat foods low in salt.
 - Lose weight or keep weight at a healthy level.
 - Do not smoke.
 - Limit alcohol.
 - Talk to your doctor regularly about your blood pressure.



To Learn More...

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Office of Women's Health
Web: www.fda.gov/womens

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Information Center
Phone: 301-592-8573
TTY: 240-629-3255
Web: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/pubs/pub_gen.htm

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