



High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

What is high blood pressure?

High blood pressure affects approximately one in three adults in the United States. High blood pressure can cause potentially serious health conditions including heart disease, kidney disease, and stroke.

Causes

Unless you take preventive steps, blood pressure tends to rise with age. A variety of conditions can cause hypertension such as lack of exercise, poor diet, obesity, and genetics.

Symptoms

Unfortunately high blood pressure usually has no symptoms and if left untreated can damage the heart, blood vessels, kidneys, and other parts of the body. Even if you feel fine it is important to know your blood pressure numbers. Below is a chart from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of normal and above normal blood pressure numbers for adults.

Treatment

High blood pressure is treated in two ways: lifestyle changes and medication. Most people will need lifelong treatment. Even if you do need to take medication it is important to have healthy habits such as:

- Eating healthful foods
- Getting enough physical activity
- Managing stress
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Quitting smoking

If you don't have high blood pressure, the above steps may help you prevent it.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's Web site provides you with information on the causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of high blood pressure. For more information visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov.

| Category | Systolic (top number) | | Diastolic (bottom number) |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Normal | Less than 120 | And | Less than 80 |
| Prehypertension | 120-139 | Or | 80-89 |
| High blood pressure | | | |
| Stage 1 | 140-159 | Or | 90-99 |
| Stage 2 | 160 or higher | Or | 100 or higher |

