



## Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

Hypertension is a common condition in which the force of the blood against the walls of the artery is too high. A person's blood pressure rises and falls during the course of the day, depending on activities a person is involved in. Over time, if untreated, it can cause health conditions such as heart Disease and stroke. High blood pressure often has no symptoms, hence, it is known as the "silent Killer".

Blood pressure is measured using two numbers:

The first number called the systolic BP, and it measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats.

The second number called the diastolic BP, and it measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is at rest between beats.

It is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg).

Normal BP is 90s to 120 / 70s to 80

Elevated BP is 120 – 129 / 80 or less

High Blood Pressure is 130 or > / 80 or >

## **Signs and Symptoms of High Blood Pressure:**

Most people with high blood pressure usually have no warning signs or symptoms and so many people are unaware that they have it. However, some people may have persistent headaches, nose bleeds, chest pain, fatigue, visual disturbance, sexual dysfunction, pounding or throbbing sensation in chest, neck, head or ears.

Checking your BP at least every 6 months or if you experience any of the symptoms noted is the only way to know if you have high blood pressure.

## **What causes High Blood Pressure:**

High Blood Pressure usually develops over time. It can happen because of unhealthy lifestyle choices such as:

- Not getting enough regular physical activity.
- High salt consumption
- Too much caffeine
- Not enough fruits, vegetables and nuts in the diet
- HBP can also happen during pregnancy.
- Obesity
- Sustained stress
- Smoking
- Poor sleeping habits
- Other medical causes such as diabetes, kidney disease and sleep apnea.
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Family history
- Living in a deprived area

Risk factors such as family history (heredity) and some medical conditions are factors that we cannot control. However, other risk factors such as lifestyle choices; healthy eating, smoking, alcohol consumption can be controlled. The situation gets much worse if genetics is combined with unhealthy lifestyle choices.

## **Other Factors:**

- Age: Blood Pressure tends to rise as one gets older, usually over 65.
- Sex: Women are as likely as men to develop HPB at some point in their lifetime.

- Race/Ethnicity: Black people develop HBP more often than white people, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians or Alaska natives do. Compared to white people, Blacks tend to develop HBP earlier in life.

### **Complications of High Blood Pressure:**

1. Blood vessel damage in which the blood vessels get narrow and stiff.
2. Stroke
3. Heart Disease
4. Aneurysm
5. Kidney damage
6. Damage to the eyes
7. Dementia

### **Treatment for high blood pressure:**

Lifestyle changes: Healthy diet, exercise, smoking cessation, decrease caffeine and alcohol intake, reduce stress.

Medications: Talk to your physician, because what works for one person may not be right for another. Some people may also need to be on 1 or more medications to control their blood pressure.

Regularly measuring your blood pressure at home if you own a BP cuff and know how to measure blood pressure.

Other places to get a BP check:

- Doctor's office
- Some pharmacies or grocery stores
- At health fair events
- In some workplaces
- Some church food Pantries

### **References:**

National High blood pressure education program. JNC-8-2014  
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. Revised September 2020.  
The American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Guideline for the Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Management of High Blood Pressure in Adults (2017 Guideline)