



Heart Disease & High Blood Pressure



What is high blood pressure?

The heart pumps blood into the arteries, which carry the blood throughout the body. Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of arteries when the heart beats. High blood pressure, also called hypertension, means that the pressure in your arteries is above the normal range. Normal blood pressure is less than 120 mmHg systolic and less than 80 mmHg diastolic.

What is the link between high blood pressure and heart attack?

Your coronary arteries normally provide blood to your heart; these arteries become smaller or narrower because of cholesterol buildup on the insides of the artery wall. As a result of this narrowing, you can either develop partial or complete blockage. This is called coronary artery disease (CAD). High blood pressure increases the risk of CAD.

People with high blood pressure are more likely to develop CAD because high blood pressure puts added force against the artery walls. Over time, this extra pressure can damage the arteries. These injured arteries are more likely to become narrowed and hardened by fatty deposits. Damaged arteries cannot deliver enough oxygen to other parts of the body. For this reason, high blood pressure can harm the brain and kidneys. High blood pressure also increases the risk for stroke, congestive heart failure, kidney disease, and blindness.

What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms. It is often called the "silent killer" because it can damage your heart, kidney, and brain, even though you feel no symptoms.

When should I get my blood pressure checked?

You should have your blood pressure checked at least once a year. Do not rely on home blood pressure machine measurements; these may not be accurate enough.

If you have high blood pressure, follow your physician's recommendations on how often you should have your blood pressure checked.



What should I do to manage high blood pressure?

Follow your physician's recommendations for changing your diet and lifestyle. These changes may include:

- Quitting smoking
- Losing weight if you are overweight
- Exercising regularly
- Eating well-balanced, nutritious meals that are low in fat, cholesterol, and salt, and high in fresh fruits and vegetables
- Limiting alcoholic beverages to no more than one ounce of pure alcohol or two drinks per day



Your diet is an important part of blood pressure control. Using dietary eating plan and limiting sodium (salt) help control blood pressure.

If you are prescribed medication to control your high blood pressure, don't stop taking it unless your physician tells you otherwise. Your medication will only work as long as you take it.

High blood pressure is just one of the risk factors related to cardiovascular disease. Learn about your other risk factors and take the steps necessary to manage or treat them.

