

High Blood Pressure: What You Should Know



CARDIOVASCULAR
RESOURCES
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High blood pressure is a common problem. Nearly one in four adults has it, but many do not know they have it. That's because you can feel great and still have high blood pressure.

High blood pressure is serious, but it can be controlled. See your doctor to learn how to control your blood pressure and have a longer, healthier life.

WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure is the force of blood as it is pumped through your arteries. If the force is greater than normal, the result is high blood pressure. **Blood pressure above 140 over 90 is too high.**

It is normal for blood pressure to go up and down during the day. Your doctor will check your pressure readings several times to be sure you have high blood pressure.

There are many reasons why pressure may be high. The reason a person's pressure is high may not be clear. Some causes are:

- Artery size is reduced because of fatty build-up inside.
- The heart is pumping harder or faster than normal.
- Another disease, such as kidney disease, causes pressure to be high.

The medical term for high blood pressure is **hypertension**.

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WHY IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE BAD?

Untreated high blood pressure can lead to many serious health problems.

When the heart works too hard to pump blood, it may become enlarged. This can lead to **heart failure**. When pressure is high, arteries "harden." This can cause **heart attack, stroke, or kidney failure**.

How Is High Blood Pressure Treated?

If you have high blood pressure, you need to take steps now to get it under control. Your doctor may suggest you do one or more of the following:

- Lose weight
- Quit smoking
- Eat foods lower in salt and fat
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Drink less alcohol
- Be more active

If these changes are not enough to lower your blood pressure, your doctor may also prescribe a medicine. This medicine should be taken every day, even when you feel fine. And along with the medicine, you still need to eat right and get exercise. Have your blood pressure checked on a regular basis to see how you're doing.

Reducing your blood pressure will reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure. Take steps now!