

HYPERTENSION

What is it?

Hypertension (High blood pressure) is a common condition in which the long-term force of the blood against your artery walls is high enough that it may eventually cause health problems, such as heart disease. Blood pressure is determined both by the amount of blood your heart pumps and the amount of resistance to blood flow in your arteries. The more blood your heart pumps and the narrower your arteries, the higher your blood pressure.

What causes hypertension?

For most adults, there is no identifiable cause of hypertension. High blood pressure generally develops over many years, and it affects nearly everyone eventually. Fortunately, high blood pressure can be easily detected. And once you know you have high blood pressure, you can work with your doctor to control it.

In some cases, high blood pressure can be caused by an underlying medical condition such as:

- Kidney disease
- Adrenal gland tumors
- Illegal drugs
- Certain defects in the blood vessels you were born with (congenital defects)
- Certain medications such as birth control, cold remedies, some prescription drugs, etc.

What are the symptoms?

You can have high blood pressure (hypertension) for years without any symptoms. Even without symptoms, damage to blood vessels and your heart continues and can be detected. Most people with high blood pressure have no symptoms, even when their blood pressure is at dangerously high levels. However, some people may experience symptoms such as:

- Shortness of breath
- Dull headaches
- Dizzy spells
- More nosebleeds than normal

How is it diagnosed?

Blood pressure measurements are routinely taken when you visit the doctor. To diagnose hypertension, your doctor may take your blood pressure at various times on two or three occasions. If all of these readings fall into the high category, you may be diagnosed with hypertension.

Low Risk	119 or less / 79 or less
Moderate Risk	120 - 139 / 80 - 89
High Risk	140 - 159 / 90 - 99

How is it treated?

Hypertension is most often managed by medication. Eating a diet that contains less salt, quitting tobacco use, exercising and losing weight are also important keys to blood pressure management. Manage blood pressure by working with your clinician to develop a plan for checking blood pressure regularly on your own.

