

What is Hypertension?

- Hypertension is the term used to describe high blood pressure, *i.e.* high force of blood flow against the wall of the arteries.
- Hypertension is more common in men than women and is also more common in elderly people than in younger people.
- Hypertension can run in families, and you are more likely to be affected if your close relatives are hypertensive.
- Normal blood pressure varies from one individual to another depending on several factors, such as age and sex.
- Normal ranges are 100-140 mmHg (Systolic) and 70-90 mmHg (Diastolic).
- There must be three consecutive high blood pressure readings to confirm that one is hypertensive.

What Causes Hypertension?

1. For about 90–95% of people with hypertension, there is no specific cause; but there are factors with which it may be associated:
 - Family history (hereditary);
 - Unhealthy eating habits including high salt intake;
 - Overweight;
 - Lack of exercise (sedentary life);

- Stress;
 - Overworking;
 - Excessive alcohol consumption;
 - Cigarette smoking; and
 - Pregnancy associated hypertension.
2. Hypertension due to other diseases such as:
 - Kidney disease;
 - Diabetes; and
 - Other endocrine diseases.

What are the symptoms of Hypertension?

- You can live for years without realizing that you have hypertension.
- That is why hypertension is commonly referred to as the '*silent killer*'.
- When you start noticing the symptoms it is, in most cases, the later stage.
- Sometimes, people with markedly elevated blood pressure may develop:
 - Headache,
 - Dizziness or Vertigo,
 - Drowsiness,
 - Blurred or double vision,
 - Nausea and vomiting,
 - Chest pain and shortness of breath,
 - Heart palpitations,
 - Fatigue – general tiredness,

- A flushed face,
- Nosebleeds, and
- Tinnitus (a ringing or buzzing in the ears).

How Does Hypertension Affect my Body?

Hypertension affects all organs in the body. However, it has more effects on:

The Brain

- High blood pressure is the most important risk factor for stroke.
- It can cause rupture of weakened blood vessel, which may then result in blood to leak into the brain.

The Heart

- High Blood Pressure is a major risk factor for heart attack and sudden death;
- It is the number one risk factor for heart failure.

The Kidneys

High blood pressure affects the functioning of kidneys. This can result into accumulation of waste in the blood and finally end up in renal failure.

The Eyes

- High blood pressure can eventually cause blood vessels to rupture and bleed in the eyes.
- It can result in blurred vision or even blindness.

How can I Prevent Hypertension?

ADOPT A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

- **Follow a healthy eating pattern:**

Emphasize fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy foods; choosing and preparing foods with less salt and sodium.

- **Maintain a healthy weight:**

Being overweight increases your risk of developing high blood pressure. In fact, blood pressure rises as body weight increases.

- **Be Physically Active:**

Being physically active is one of the most important steps you can take to prevent or control high blood pressure. It also helps reduce your risk of heart disease. It doesn't take much effort to become physically active.

- **Limit Alcohol:**

Taking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure. It can also harm the liver, brain, and heart. Alcoholic drinks also contain calories, which may hinder your effort to lose weight.

- **Quit Smoking:**

Smoking injures blood vessel walls and speeds up the process of hardening of the arteries.

What should I do if Lifestyle Modification is not working?

Consult your doctor; there is a wide range of effective drugs for treatment of high blood pressure.

Things to remember:

- Hypertension is a silent killer disease; regular checkup is very important.
- You can know that you have hypertension only by consulting a healthcare provider and have your blood pressure checked.
- People with uncontrolled hypertension are:
 - **Three** times most likely to develop coronary heart disease,
 - **Six** times most likely to develop congestive heart failure, and
 - **Seven** times most likely to have a stroke.

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BASIC FACTS ABOUT HYPERTENSION

'A Healthy Mind Thrives in a Healthy Body'