



Understanding High Blood Pressure

What is high blood pressure?

- High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is the condition caused when the force of blood pushing against the walls of the blood vessels leading away from your heart is too strong.

Is high blood pressure dangerous?

- Yes. It can kill you.

How is blood pressure measured?

- Two levels of pressure are measured and recorded as numbers. These levels are called the systolic pressure (the top number) and the diastolic pressure (the bottom number).
- Your blood pressure is high if your top number is 140 or higher and your bottom number is 90 or higher.

What things increase my risk of developing high blood pressure?

Things you can control:

- Being very overweight
- Eating too much salt and fat
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Smoking
- Not exercising
- Stress

Things you cannot control:

- Race: African Americans develop high blood pressure more often than other races.
- Heredity: A tendency to have high blood pressure runs in families.
- Age: The older you get, your chance of developing high blood pressure becomes greater.

What can I do to help control my blood pressure?

- Follow your doctor's instructions
- Eat foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat and sodium (salt)
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Women should not have more than one serving of alcohol per day
- Men should not have more than two servings of alcohol per day

- Do not smoke
- **Exercise**
- Learn how to manage stress and relax

Remember

Try not to make too many changes at once. If you work on one thing at a time, you'll be more likely to stick to your lifestyle changes. Think to yourself *"I can do it!"*

Blood Pressure Categories

Systolic		Diastolic	=	Category	
Less than 120	and	Less than 80	=	Normal	Good for you!
120-139	or	80-89	=	Prehypertension	Your blood pressure could be a problem.
140-159	or	90-99	=	High . Stage 1	You have high blood pressure. Ask a doctor or nurse how to control it.
160 or higher	or	100 or higher	=	High . Stage 2	

