Hypertension

Hypertension, also known as 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

Hypertension is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and a precursor to other chronic illnesses such as high cholesterol and diabetes. It can be managed with lifestyle changes and medicines.

Your 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.

At first, you may not notice symptoms with high blood pressure, but over time you may feel the following symptoms: shortness of breath; tired, faint, or dizzy; swelling in your legs, ankles, feet, and belly; or chest pain.

What do your results mean?

Your blood pressure consists of two numbers: systolic and diastolic. **Healthy blood pressure should be 120/80 mmHg or lower.**

The **systolic number** is how hard the blood pushes when the heart is pumping. A systolic between 120–129 mmHg is elevated blood pressure. A systolic of 130 mmHg or higher signals hypertension.

The **diastolic number** is how hard the blood pushes between heartbeats, when the heart is relaxed and filling with blood. A diastolic of >80 mmHg or higher is hypertensive.

Systolic		
119 or less	120 – 139	140 or more
Normal	Moderate Risk	High Risk

Diastolic		
79 or less	80 – 89	90 or more
Normal	Moderate Risk	High Risk

Causes of high blood pressure

Several things are known to raise blood pressure, including being overweight, drinking a lot of alcohol, having a family history of high blood pressure, eating too much salt, inactivity, and age. Your nutrition is important, too. Too little potassium and calcium in your diet can contribute to high blood pressure.

Given the risks, it can be stressful to learn that you have high blood pressure. The good news is there are things you can start doing today to feel better and reduce your risk.

Take Action

You can prevent raising your blood pressure by making these lifestyle changes:

- **Stay at a healthy weight** or lose extra weight.
- **Eat heart-healthy foods** and limit sodium.
- **Pick an apple** over that bag of chips when packing your lunch!
- **Exercise** regularly.
- **Join a gym,** go for a daily walk, or participate in an outdoor activity like kayaking or hiking.
- **Limit alcohol** to two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.

Hypertension is a serious condition, but can be prevented or improved with the help of your health center. Talk to your health coach or doctor. The only way to know your blood pressure is to get it checked regularly, so make sure to visit your health centers routinely every three months.

Make an appointment today to create your personalized health plan.

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