

High Blood Pressure (part 1)

Recently I was doing research on High Blood Pressure and was on the web. I thought the **American Heart Association website** was really good and thought I would pass on some of their information: According to recent estimates, nearly one in three U.S. adults has high blood pressure, but because there are no symptoms, nearly one-third of these people don't know they have it. In fact, many people have high blood pressure for years without knowing it. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure. This is why high blood pressure is often called the "silent killer." The only way to tell if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked. Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against artery walls.

If this force is too strong for a long period of time, you have "high blood pressure."

The medical term for high blood pressure is hypertension. Blood pressure measurements consist of 2 different numbers. One is called your "systolic" blood pressure. The other is your "diastolic" blood pressure. The first or top number is your systolic blood pressure. It is always the larger of the two numbers. It represents the pressure against your blood vessels when your heart is contracting (pumping out blood). The bottom or second number is your diastolic blood pressure. It is always the smaller of the two numbers. If either systolic or diastolic blood pressure (BP) is in the High or Very High range, you have high blood pressure.

The blood pressure categories are:

- Very High Range = Stage 2 Hypertension
Systolic blood pressure 160 mm Hg or higher OR diastolic blood pressure 100 mm Hg or higher
- High Range = Stage 1 Hypertension
Systolic blood pressure 140 - 159 mm Hg OR diastolic blood pressure 90 - 99 mm Hg
- Caution Range = Prehypertension
Systolic blood pressure 120 - 139 mm Hg OR diastolic blood pressure 80 - 89 mm Hg
- Normal Range = Normal
Systolic blood pressure below 120 mm Hg AND diastolic blood pressure below 80 mm Hg

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider lifestyle changes

Blood pressure usually increases with age. You should consider making lifestyle changes now so your blood pressure stays as low as possible as you get older.

1. **Know your blood pressure. Have it checked regularly. Know what your weight should be. Keep it at or below that level.**
2. Don't use too much salt in cooking or at meals. Avoid salty foods.
3. Eat a diet **low in saturated fat** according to American Heart Association recommendations.
4. Control alcohol intake. Don't have more than one drink a day if you're a woman or two a day if you're a man.
5. Keep appointments with the doctor.
6. Follow your doctor's advice about **physical activity**.
7. Make certain your parents, brothers, sisters and children have their blood pressure checked regularly.