



Basic Steps to Helping Control Your Blood Pressure



What is high blood pressure?

Normal blood pressure is below 120/80

Pre-hypertension is between 120/80 and 139/89

High blood pressure is 140/90 or above

Why is controlling blood pressure important?

High blood pressure is known as the "silent killer" because you may not feel bad even when your blood pressure is very high. Because you may not have any warning signs you need to check your blood pressure regularly. When blood pressure remains high it makes the heart work harder and can lead to serious conditions such as:

Stroke
Heart Attack or Heart Failure
Kidney Failure
Eye problems (blurred vision or blindness)

What can be done to prevent or lower high blood pressure?

- ✓ **Stay physically active.** Aim for 30 minutes of exercise at least 5 days a week (Walking briskly, climbing the stairs, doing yard work or cleaning the house are all physical activities)
- ✓ **Maintain a healthy weight.**
- ✓ **Minimize your salt and sodium intake.** This means more than not adding salt to foods. Many processed foods (such as canned and frozen foods) are very high in sodium so make sure to check the label and try to use foods marked: "low sodium" "reduced sodium" or "sodium free". A low sodium diet includes *fresh fruits and vegetables, low fat dairy products, whole grains, skinless poultry and fish*. You should limit sodium to 2400mg a day which is about equal to 1 teaspoon of table salt.
- ✓ **Cut back on alcoholic beverages.** Limit yourself to 1-2 drinks per day
- ✓ **Lower your stress as much as possible.** Stress may cause blood pressure to increase so it is important to develop relaxation techniques and other stress management strategies.
- ✓ **Avoid cigarettes and alcohol.** Smoking cigarettes and drinking caffeine will cause a temporary rise in blood pressure so it will affect your readings if you smoke immediately before having your blood pressure taken.

Taking your medications:

Sometimes blood pressure can not be controlled with lifestyle changes alone. Your doctor may put you on blood pressure medications. As with all medications it is important to know:

- ❖ *Name of the medication*
- ❖ *What it is used for*
- ❖ *How long to take it*
- ❖ *How to store it*
- ❖ *How much to take*
- ❖ *What time of day to take it*
- ❖ *What food, drinks or other medications should be avoided while on the medication*
- ❖ *How often to take it*
- ❖ *What type of side effects or reactions may occur from taking this medication*
- ❖ *What to do if a dose is missed*
- ❖ *How much to take*