



SENIOR HEALTH

High Blood Pressure

WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO MANAGE IT

Hypertension is the medical term for high blood pressure. Blood pressure is the measure of the force of blood flowing against artery walls.

A blood pressure reading involves two numbers. The first, the systolic, measures the pressure on your arteries when your heart beats and pushes blood through your circulatory system. The second, the diastolic, measures the pressure on your arteries between beats when your heart is resting. A normal blood pressure reading would be 120/80. A diastolic reading of between 90 and 104 indicates mild hypertension. Moderate hypertension would have a diastolic reading of between 105 and 114. A reading of more than 115 is considered severe hypertension.

RISK FACTORS FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

tobacco use

lack of exercise

excess weight

diabetes

a high-cholesterol diet

alcohol consumption

a stress-prone personality

heredity

being African-American

high sodium intake

GET PROPER TREATMENT

There are simple ways to bring down your high blood pressure and keep it there. Treating even mild hypertension is considered beneficial. This is a relatively new concept, so if your doctor told you in the past that treating your mild high blood pressure was unnecessary, ask again.

TAKE YOUR MEDICATION

High blood pressure can be lowered with medication, but it will rise again if you stop taking your prescription. Take your medication at the same time every day. Make it a part of your regular routine. If you miss a day, don't double up on a dose. Call your doctor for advice.

TIPS TO HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

- Reduce your intake of saturated fat and sodium.
- Limit your intake of caffeine.
- Eat a well-balanced diet that contains fish, chicken, grains and fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Limit your alcohol consumption.
- Watch your weight. If you're overweight, lose weight now.
- Get regular aerobic exercise at least three times a week. Check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- Reduce stress by using relaxation techniques.
- If you smoke, quit.