



Get “Pumped”

About Good Health

High blood pressure is not something that just happens to other people.

High blood pressure is a serious health condition. Think about this:

- One out of every four American adults has high blood pressure.
- High blood pressure can increase your chances of getting heart disease or having a stroke.
- High blood pressure is called the “silent killer” because it often has no warning signs or symptoms.

Knowing this, you’ll want to do everything you can to prevent high blood pressure.

If untreated, high blood pressure can lead to serious medical problems like hardening of the arteries, heart attack, enlarged heart, kidney damage and stroke.

If your doctor prescribes medicine, be sure you know how and when to take it.

Who gets high blood pressure?

Anyone can develop high blood pressure. It is most common among young adults, but it can affect children, too. You are especially at risk if:

- you are older than age 65
- you are African-American
- your parents or grandparents have high blood pressure
- you have diabetes

You can prevent high blood pressure.

High blood pressure is a common disease, but it can be prevented. No matter what your race, age, sex, or family history, you can lower your chances of developing high blood pressure. Here’s how:

- Maintain a healthy weight and lose weight if you are overweight.
- Stay physically active 30 minutes a day, five days a week.
- Eat foods low in salt/sodium.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages. If you drink, do so only in moderation.
- Don’t smoke.

What is blood pressure?

As your blood moves to different parts of your body, it travels through blood vessels called arteries. “Blood pressure” is the force of your blood pushing against the artery walls as it moves through them.

Different activities make your blood pressure go up or down. For example, if you run for a bus, your blood pressure goes up. When you sleep at night, your blood pressure goes down. These changes in blood pressure are normal.

If your blood pressure is up most or all of the time, it means that your blood is pushing on your arteries with harder than normal force. When this occurs, you have high blood pressure.

How high is too high?

Your blood pressure is at its greatest when your heart contracts – or squeezes – and pumps blood. This is called “systolic” pressure. Your blood pressure is at its lowest when the heart is at rest, or between beats. This is “diastolic” pressure.

Blood pressure is always expressed in systolic and diastolic pressure. It is measured in “millimeters of mercury,” represented as mm Hg. You will usually see blood pressure written like this:

120 systolic/80 diastolic mm Hg measured in millimeters of mercury

High blood pressure is 140/90 mm Hg or higher.

BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS IN NORMAL ADULTS* (Age 18 and older)		
Blood Pressure Level		
Risk Category	Systolic	Diastolic
Normal	120 or less	80 or less
Prehypertensive	120-139	80-89
High	140 or higher	90 or higher

**For those not taking medicine for high blood pressure and not having a short-term illness. If you have diabetes, see your doctor frequently for blood pressure checks and other necessary tests. These categories are from the National High Blood Pressure Program.*

**High blood pressure often has no symptoms or warning signs.
That's why you should have your blood pressure checked regularly.**

