

HYPERTENSION (HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE)

What is hypertension?

A common illness called high blood pressure occurs when the blood's long-term force against your artery walls is high enough to potentially harm your health. The more blood your heart pumps and the narrower your arteries, the higher your blood pressure.

How does hypertension affect my heart?

Your chance of developing significant health issues, such as heart attacks and strokes, rises when your blood pressure is uncontrolled.

How do I know if I have high blood pressure?

Getting your blood pressure checked is the only method to find out if you have hypertension.

Symptoms

Years can go by while you have high blood pressure (hypertension) with no signs or symptoms. Only a small percentage of people with high blood pressure have headaches, shortness of breath, or nosebleeds, and these signs and symptoms typically don't appear until high blood pressure has reached a severe or life-threatening level.

Risk Factors

- **Age:** As you become older, your risk of having high blood pressure increases.
- **Genetics:** In families, blood pressure issues are common.
- **Excess body weight:** Being obese or overweight: More blood is required to carry oxygen and nutrients to your tissues if you are overweight. The strain on your artery walls increases when more blood is circulated through your blood vessels.
- **Lack of exercise:** Heart rates are generally higher in inactive people. Your heart has to work harder and exert more force on your arteries when your heart rate is higher. Being overweight is also made more likely by inactivity.
- **Smoking:** In addition to momentarily raising blood pressure when you smoke or chew tobacco, nicotine also contains chemicals that can harm the lining of your artery walls. This may restrict your arteries and raise your chance of developing heart disease. The risk of heart disease can also be increased by second hand smoke.
- **Alcohol:** Alcohol abuse can harm your heart over time. Men and women may experience blood pressure changes if they consume more than two drinks per day.

- **Diets high in salt:** Your body may retain fluid as a result of eating too much salt, which will raise blood pressure.
- **Too little Potassium:** When sodium levels in your cells are out of balance, potassium helps. You run the risk of having too much sodium in your blood if you don't consume enough potassium in your diet or retain enough potassium.
- **Stress:** High stress levels might cause a brief rise in blood pressure.
- **Certain chronic conditions:** e.g., kidney disease, diabetes and sleep apnoea.

Although adults are more likely than children to have high blood pressure, kids might still be at risk. Some children's high blood pressure is brought on by kidney or heart problems. However, a growing percentage of children are developing high blood pressure due to bad lifestyle choices such as an unhealthy diet, obesity, and inactivity.

Lifestyle changes – How to improve my health

Even if you take blood pressure medication, lifestyle changes can help in controlling and preventing high blood pressure.

How?

- Eat nutritious, heart-healthy foods. Try the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, or the Mediterranean Diet which emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, chicken, fish, and low-fat dairy products
 - Replace sugar with fresh fruit or vegetable snacks
 - Try to avoid processed food
 - Reduce your salt intake
 - Shop smarter! Read the food labels so you can identify, and avoid, products that contain hidden salt
- Exercise regularly (preferably 30 min of moderate-intensity exercise every day – walking, swimming, cycling)
- Stop smoking
- Manage your stress in a healthy way
- Limit your alcohol intake
- Get a good night's sleep

Monitor your blood pressure at home and get regular check-ups with your medical doctor

Support

Your support system can have a big impact on many factors, including how you feel about yourself generally, how anxious you are, how and where you seek treatment. It may even influence the outcome of your sickness. Having a support system is crucial.