

HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time

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May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps blood. High blood pressure, sometimes called hypertension, happens when this force is too high. Blood pressure readings have 2 numbers:

- **Systolic Pressure:** blood pressure when the heart beats while pumping blood
- **Diastolic Pressure:** blood pressure when the heart is at rest between beats

Normal Blood Pressure for adults is defined as a systolic pressure below 120 mmHg and a diastolic pressure below 80 mmHg. It is normal for blood pressure to change when you sleep, wake up, or are excited or nervous. When you are active, it is normal for your blood pressure to increase. However, once the activity stops, your blood pressure returns to your normal baseline range.

Blood pressure normally rises with age and body size. Newborn babies often have very low blood pressure that is considered normal for babies, while older teens have numbers similar to adults.

Stages	Systolic (top number)		Diastolic (bottom number)
Prehypertension	120-139	OR	80-89
High BP Stage 1	140-159	OR	90-99
High BP Stage 2	160 +	OR	100 +

People with diabetes or chronic kidney disease should keep their blood pressure below 130/80.

Abnormal Blood Pressure

increases are defined as having blood pressures higher than 120/80 mmHg. The above table outlines and defines high blood pressure severity levels.

Risk Factors for High Blood Pressure

Anyone can develop high blood pressure; however, age, race or ethnicity, being overweight, gender, lifestyle habits, and a family history of high blood pressure can increase your risk for developing high blood pressure.

Age: Blood pressure tends to rise with age. About 65 percent of Americans age 60 or older have high blood pressure.

Race/Ethnicity: High blood pressure is more common in African American adults than in Caucasian or Hispanic American adults. Compared with these ethnic groups, African Americans tend to get high blood pressure earlier in life; often, on average, have higher blood pressure numbers; and are less likely to achieve target blood pressure goals with treatment.

Overweight: You are more likely to develop prehypertension or high blood pressure if you're overweight or obese. The terms "overweight" and "obese" refer to body weight that's greater than what is considered healthy for a certain height.

Gender: Prior to age 55, men are more likely than women to develop high blood pressure. After age 55, women are more likely than men to develop high blood pressure.

Lifestyle Habits: Unhealthy lifestyle habits can raise your risk for high blood pressure, and they include:

- Eating too much sodium or too little potassium
- Lack of physical activity
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Stress



Family History: A family history of high blood pressure raises the risk of developing prehypertension or high blood pressure. Some people have a high sensitivity to sodium and salt, which may raise their risk for high blood pressure and may run in families.

Medical Causes of High Blood Pressure: Prescription medicines such as asthma or hormone therapies, including birth control pills and estrogen, and over-the-counter medicines such as cold relief meds may cause this form of high blood pressure.

Other medical causes of high blood pressure include medical conditions such as chronic kidney disease, sleep apnea, thyroid problems, or certain tumors. This happens because these other conditions change the way your body controls fluids, sodium, and hormones in your blood, which leads to secondary high pressure

Complications of High Blood Pressure: When blood pressure stays high over time, it can damage the body and cause complications. Some common complications and their signs and symptoms include:

- **Peripheral Artery Disease**
- **Chronic Kidney Disease**
- **Cognitive Changes**
- **Heart Failure**
- **Stroke**
- **Eye Damage**
- **Heart Attack**
- **Aneurysms**

— National Heart Lung and Blood Institute



Be Aware...Know Your Numbers!



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Melanoma/Skin Cancer Prevention and Awareness Month

Skin cancer is the most common kind of cancer in the United States. There are 3 major types of skin cancer:

- Basal cell carcinoma
- Squamous cell carcinoma
- Melanoma (Melanoma is the most dangerous kind of skin cancer.)

Skin cancer can almost always be cured when it's found and treated early. That's why it's a good idea to check your skin regularly for new growths (like moles or lumps) or changes in old growths. Tell your doctor or nurse right away if you find a change.

The Cause: Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is the main cause of skin cancer. UV radiation can also come from tanning beds, tanning booths, or sunlamps.

Who is at Risk: Anyone can get skin cancer. The risk is highest for people with:

- White or light-colored skin with freckles
- Blond or red hair
- Blue or green eyes

You are at higher risk for the most dangerous type of skin cancer (melanoma) if you have:

- Unusual moles (moles that change color, grow unevenly, or change in texture)
- A large number of moles (more than 50)
- A family history of melanoma

Prevention: The best way to prevent skin cancer is to protect your skin from the sun and other sources of ultraviolet (UV) rays.

- Stay in the shade as much as possible between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher. Use sunscreen with both UVA and UVB protection. Check the expiration date on the bottle to make sure it's not out of date.
 - Wear sunscreen even on cloudy days. UV rays can still harm your skin through the clouds.
 - Plan ahead – put sunscreen on 30 minutes before you go outside. Put on more sunscreen every 2 hours and after you swim or sweat.
 - Be sure to use enough sunscreen (a handful). Don't forget to apply it to your lips, ears, hands, feet, and the back of your neck.
 - If you wear very lightweight clothing (like a beach cover-up or thin T-shirt), put sunscreen on under your clothes.
 - Cover up with long sleeves, long pants or a skirt, a hat, and sunglasses.
- Avoid indoor tanning.



— US Dept of Health and Human Services



Protect The Skin You're In!

