

## Can Hypertension be prevented?

Hypertension can best be prevented by having a healthy diet and exercise as a key component in your lifestyle. Blood pressures tends to rise with age, but by following a healthy lifestyle, you can prevent this rise in blood pressure.

It is important to screen, diagnose, treat and control hypertension in its earliest stages.

Here are some practical ways to avoid hypertension:

- ◆ Maintain a healthy weight. Talk to your doctor about the best weight for you.
- ◆ Eat a balanced diet. Eating healthy foods can help keep your blood pressure under control. Eat a lot of fruits and vegetables, especially those rich in potassium and limit intake of excess calories, fat and sugar.
- ◆ Reduce sodium intake. Most adults should have less than 1 teaspoon or 2,300 milligrams of sodium a day. Limit your salt intake by avoiding high-sodium packaged and processed foods and not adding extra salt to your meals.
- ◆ Exercise regularly at least 30 minutes three times a week.
- ◆ Cut down on alcohol.
- ◆ Monitor blood pressure regularly. If your doctor determines that you have pre-hypertension, your doctor may recommend steps to avoid hypertension.

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A publication of SMMC - October 2014

# Hypertension



**SAFETY**  
**HEALTH**  
**SATISFACTION**

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*St. Maarten Medical Center*

## What is Hypertension?

Every time the human heart beats, it pumps blood to the whole body through the arteries. Hypertension, also called high blood pressure, is a condition in which the arteries have persistently elevated blood pressure.

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the blood vessel walls. The higher the pressure, the harder the heart has to pump.

The normal level for blood pressure is between 110/70mm/Hg and 140/80mm/Hg. The top number in the reading represent the systolic measurement (peak pressure in the arteries) and the bottom number represents diastolic measurement (minimum pressure in the arteries).

## What causes hypertension?

The exact cause of hypertension is usually unknown, though there are several factors that have been highly associated with the condition, such as:

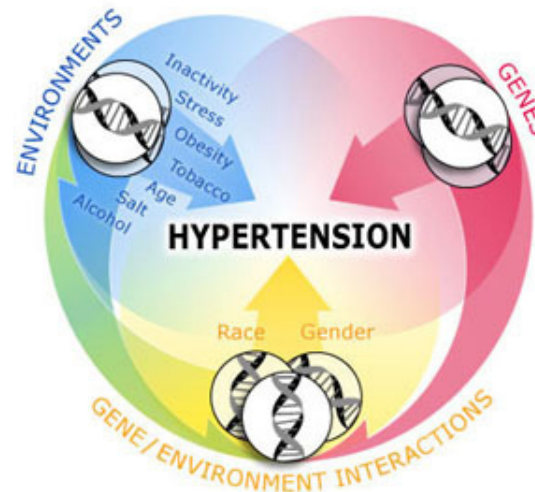
- ◆ Smoking
- ◆ Obesity
- ◆ Diabetes
- ◆ Lack of physical activity
- ◆ High level of salt intake
- ◆ Stress
- ◆ Aging
- ◆ Chronic kidney disease
- ◆ Vitamin D deficiency
- ◆ Insufficient calcium, potassium, and magnesium consumption

## What are the symptoms of hypertension?

It is not unusual that a person with hypertension present no symptoms of the condition. For this reason, is advisable to undergo periodic blood pressure screenings when no symptoms are present.

Extreme high blood pressure may lead to some symptoms, however and these include:

- ◆ Severe headache
- ◆ Fatigue or confusion
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Nausea
- ◆ Problem with vision
- ◆ Chest pains
- ◆ Breathing difficulties
- ◆ Irregular heartbeat
- ◆ Blood in the urine



## How is Hypertension diagnosed?

A diagnosis of hypertension is made by a health professional who would measure the blood pressure using a device called a sphygmomanometer: a device with an arm cuff, dial, pump and valve.

Someone with a pressure reading greater than 140/90mg/dl is considered to have hypertension.

It is important to know that one time pressure measurement does not mean you have hypertension. Your health professional will usually conduct a physical exam and will ask for your and your family history medical history to know if you have any risk factors such as smoking, high cholesterol or diabetes

## How is hypertension treated?

It is important to treat hypertension to reduce the risk of stroke, heart attack and heart failure.

The main aim of treatment is to lower blood pressure to less than 140/90. For some groups of people, this may have to be lower depending on if they have diabetes or a chronic kidney disease.

High blood pressure may be treated with the use of medications, lifestyle changes or a combination of the two.