

CULPEPER MEDICAL CLINIC

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Hypertension

When you have hypertension, or high blood pressure, your heart has to work harder to pump your blood through your body. This can cause your heart to fail.

What is blood pressure?

Your blood travels through your body in blood vessels and arteries. **Your blood pressure measures how much force your moving blood puts on your artery walls.**

How is blood pressure measured?

Blood pressure is measured by putting a blood pressure cuff around your arm, inflating the cuff and listening for the flow of blood.

What do the numbers mean?

Blood pressure readings are given in 2 numbers such as 120/70. The top number is called the **systolic pressure (heart beats)** and the bottom number is called the **diastolic pressure (rests between heart beats)**.

- Normal blood pressure is not more than 120/80.
- High blood pressure, which is called hypertension, is 140/90 or greater.
- Because there are no symptoms for high blood pressure, it is important to check your blood pressure at least every 2 years after age 21, and more often when you're over age 35.
- One high blood pressure reading does not mean you have high blood pressure, but it is a sign to have it checked more often.

Prehypertension

Prehypertension is when someone has higher than normal blood pressure, in the range in between 120/80 and 140/90, but it is not dangerously high. People with prehypertension are at risk for their blood pressure getting higher. If you are in this range it is important to monitor your blood pressure and to talk to your health care provider about how to lower it.

Negative Affects of High Blood Pressure

Untreated high blood pressure increases your chances of:

- Heart Attack
- Stroke
- Kidney Failure
- Eye Problems
- Coronary Artery Disease
- Diabetes
- Erectile Dysfunction
- Other Organ Damage

People at Risk for Developing High Blood Pressure

- People with family members who have high blood pressure
- People who smoke
- African-Americans
- Women who are pregnant
- Women who take birth control pills
- People over the age of 35
- People who are overweight or obese
- People who are not active
- People who drink too much alcohol
- People who eat too many high fat foods or foods with too much salt

How to Lower Blood Pressure and Keep it Low

High Blood pressure cannot be cured, but it can be controlled.

- Check your blood pressure regularly and know your numbers
- Don't smoke
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit alcoholic drinks
- Learn to relax
- Exercise at least 4 days per week
- Limit salty foods
- Take your medication as directed by your health care provider



Eating to Lower Blood Pressure

You can also lower your blood pressure by changing what you eat.

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Switch from whole dairy products to low-fat dairy products
- Eat whole grain breads, cereals, crackers and pastas
- Eat lean meats like fish and poultry
- Rarely eat sweets such as candy, cakes, cookies, pastries and sweetened drinks and sodas
- Eat less sodium by staying away from salty foods such as potato chips, corn chips, crackers and canned foods

Seek medical attention if you have bad side effects from your blood pressure medication.

Do not stop taking your medication without talking to your health care provider.