

HYPERTENSION

Why is it important to know about hypertension?

Hypertension means ‘high blood pressure’. It is a major cause of heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. About 50% of people who have a heart attack and 66% who have a stroke have hypertension. About one in four adults has hypertension, but only about one-third of those are aware that their blood pressure is high. In fact, hypertension usually doesn’t have any warning signs and has been called “the silent killer.” But fortunately, treatment is available and effective.

Who is likely to develop hypertension? What are the risk factors?

- Age (over 35)
- Excessive weight
- Physical inactivity
- Family history of hypertension
- Diabetes, gout and kidney diseases
- Excessive salt intake
- Excessive alcohol intake
- Pregnancy
- Race - African-Americans are at higher risk than Caucasians

What can you do about it?

If you have high blood pressure, it is important to consult a doctor because a doctor can identify the best way to control your blood pressure. Treatment options may include:

- Weight control
- A healthy diet, low in saturated fat, cholesterol and salt
- Regular exercise
- Limiting alcohol intake
- Medication

Blood Pressure Categories

Two numbers are recorded when measuring your blood pressure. The top or larger number is the **systolic** pressure, the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. The bottom or smaller number is the **diastolic** pressure, the pressure in your arteries when your heart rests between beats. The categories below indicate blood pressure ranges.

Category	Systolic	Diastolic
Normal	Less than 120	Less than 80
Prehypertension	120-139	80-89
Hypertension	140 and above	90 and above

Is it safe to donate blood if my blood pressure is high?

High blood pressure is not known to cause problems with blood donation unless it is above 180/100. If it is above this level, we do not allow blood donation until the problem is controlled.

It is important to get your blood pressure checked on a regular basis. Regular blood donation is a good way to routinely monitor your blood pressure in addition to having it done by your physician. Please take this form, which notes your blood pressure today, with you when you do see your health care provider.

If you have immediate questions or concerns, please call us at **1-800-688-0900**. One of our trained health professionals will be happy to speak with you. You can also go to the American Heart Association’s website at www.americanheart.org for more information.

Your blood pressure today was _____