

## High Blood Pressure

### What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of the blood against the walls of the arteries, generated by the heart as it pumps blood to all parts of the body. Maximum pressure is exerted on the walls of the blood vessels as the heart pumps blood. This is the top number in a blood pressure reading known as the systolic pressure. The lower number, known as the diastolic pressure, is the pressure on the arteries when the heart is at rest or relaxes between beats.

### What is high blood pressure?

Everybody's blood pressure is slightly different. Blood pressure readings, age and other factors determine the diagnosis of hypertension or more commonly termed "high blood pressure". Typically, if you have a sustained blood pressure reading of 140/90 or above, you should see your doctor for an evaluation.

### What causes high blood pressure?

No one knows for sure. However, certain factors increase your odds of developing high blood pressure. Heredity, race, age and sex are factor you can't control that effect your risk of high blood pressure. However other risk factors that you can control include diet, substance abuse, cigarette smoking, medication and lack of proper exercise.

### Why is high blood pressure called the "silent killer"?

People with high blood pressure may have no symptoms or warning signs. You may feel "great" and think you're in perfect health and still be a potential victim of developing the following health hazards: arteries that become hardened or abnormal and lead to a stroke, heart failure or heart attack, kidney failure, and blindness.

### Can High Blood Pressure Be Cured?

You can prevent and control high blood pressure by "taking action" and adopting a healthy lifestyle.

- Follow a healthy eating pattern
- Reduce salt in your diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Be physically active
- Limit alcohol intake
- Quit smoking

Your physician may find it necessary to prescribe medication in combination with the above. Regardless of your age, a periodic blood pressure test should be part of your routine to stay healthy.