



World Hypertension Day 2018



Every year, May 17th is dedicated as World Hypertension Day (WHD). For the World Health Organisation and partners to focus on the global problem of high blood pressure. The theme for World Hypertension Day 2018 is Know Your Numbers with a goal of increasing high blood pressure (BP) awareness in all populations around the world. Hypertension is a silent killer affecting a third of the adult population.

What is Hypertension?

Hypertension also known as high blood pressure is a common condition in which the long-term force of the blood against the artery walls is high enough that it may eventually cause health problems.

It is determined both by the amount of blood your heart pumps and the amount of resistance to blood flow in your arteries. The more blood your heart pumps and the narrower your arteries, the higher your blood pressure.

Symptoms

You can have BP for years without any symptoms though the damage to blood vessels and heart continues and can be detected.

High blood pressure generally develops over many years and it affects nearly everyone eventually.

However, if blood pressure reaches the level of a hypertensive crisis, a person may experience headaches and nosebleeds.

Risk Factors

- **Age** - The risk of high blood pressure increases as you age. Through early middle age, or about age 45, high blood pressure is more common in men. Women are more likely to develop high blood pressure after 65 years.
- **Race** - High blood pressure is particularly common among Africans, often developing at an earlier age than it does in Caucasians.
- **Family history** - High blood pressure tends to run in families.
- **Being overweight or obese** - The more you weigh, the more blood you need to supply oxygen and nutrients to your tissues. As the volume of blood circulated through your blood vessels increases, so does the pressure on your arteries' walls.
- **Lack of physical activity** - People who are inactive tend to have higher heart rates. The higher your heart rate, the harder your heart must work with each contraction and the stronger the force on your arteries. Lack of physical activity also increases the risk of being overweight.
- **Tobacco smoking** - Not only does smoking or chewing tobacco immediately raise your blood pressure temporarily, but the chemicals in tobacco can damage the lining of your artery walls. This can cause narrowing of arteries and leads to increasing blood pressure. This also includes Second hand smoke.
- **Too much salt (sodium) in your diet** - Too much sodium in your diet can cause the body to retain fluid, which increases blood pressure.
- **Too little potassium in the diet** - Potassium helps balance the amount of sodium in the cells. If you don't get enough potassium in your diet or retain enough potassium, you may accumulate too much sodium in blood.
- **Too little vitamin D your in the diet** - It's uncertain if having too little vitamin D in your diet can lead to high blood pressure. Too little Vitamin D may however affect an enzyme produced by your kidneys that affects your blood pressure.
- **Excessive alcohol drinking** - Over time, heavy drinking can damage your heart. Having more than two drinks a day for men and more than one drink a day for women may affect your blood pressure.
- **Stress** - High levels of stress can lead to a temporary increase in blood pressure. If you try to relax by eating more, using tobacco or drinking alcohol, you may only increase problems with high blood pressure.
- **Certain chronic conditions** - Chronic conditions such as kidney disease, diabetes and sleep apnea can increase the risk of high blood pressure, such as:



Managing Blood Pressure

Management usually involves making lifestyle changes including:

- Losing weight
- Quitting smoking
- Eating a healthy diet, which is high in fruits, vegetables, lean protein and whole grains and low in salt and fat
- Reducing the amount of salt in your diet
- Regular aerobic exercise (such as brisk walking) and limiting alcohol consumption
- Seeking treatment for sleep apnea (interrupted breathing during sleeping)
- Limiting sweets, added sugars beverages containing sugar and red meats

When to contact the doctor about high blood pressure

- If you are diagnosed with high blood pressure, it's important to see your doctor on a regular basis. He or she can answer your questions during these visits
- If you aren't responding to the prescribed treatment and your blood pressure is still high
- In case of any side effects from the blood pressure medication. If this happens, your doctor may wish to adjust the dosage of the medication or put you on other medication

Complications

Long-term hypertension can cause complications through atherosclerosis, where the formation of plaque results in the narrowing of blood vessels.

This makes hypertension worse, as the heart must pump harder to deliver blood to the body leading to the following:

- Heart failure and heart attacks
- Abnormal bulges in the walls of an artery (aneurysm) that can burst, causing severe bleeding and in some cases, death
- Kidney failure
- Stroke
- Amputation
- Hypertensive retinopathies in the eye, which can lead to blindness

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