



UNDERSTANDING AND CONTROLLING BLOOD PRESSURE

About 1 in 3 U.S. adults have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, which increases the risk for heart disease and stroke.

Often, there are no warning signs or symptoms, and many people don't realize they have it. That's why it's important to get your blood pressure checked regularly. However, the good news is that you can take several simple steps to prevent or treat hypertension.

SYSTOLIC AND DIASTOLIC

Blood pressure is measured using two numbers. The first (systolic) number represents the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart beats. The second (diastolic) number represents the pressure in your vessels when your heart rests between beats. If the measurement reads 120 systolic and 80 diastolic, health care providers call that "120 over 80."

A healthy rate of blood pressure for adults is anything less than 120 over 80. Anything higher than that rate could be a cause for concern for you and your primary care physician.

CAUSES AND PREVENTION

The exact causes of high blood pressure are not known, but many factors and conditions can play a role in its development, including:

- Smoking
- Obesity
- Lack of physical activity
- Excessive consumption of salt, alcohol, or caffeine
- High levels of stress
- Older age
- Genetics
- Chronic kidney disease
- Adrenal and thyroid disorders

While some hypertension is treated with medication, an important way to control your blood pressure is by considering the factors above and living a healthy lifestyle. Regular and vigorous exercise, good nutrition and weight management, stress reduction, and avoidance of salt, caffeine, and second-hand smoke are all important first steps to managing high blood pressure.

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