

What Is High Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the artery walls. It's measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

The blood pressure is defined as high when the pressure in your arteries is higher than it should be.

Blood pressure is written as two numbers, such as 112/78 mm Hg. The upper number, called systolic pressure, is the pressure when the heart beats. The lower number, called diastolic pressure, is the pressure when the heart rests between beats.

Normal blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg. If you're an adult and your systolic pressure is 120 to 129, and your diastolic pressure is less than 80, you have **elevated blood pressure**. **High blood pressure** is a systolic pressure of 130 or higher, or a diastolic pressure of 80 or higher, that stays high over time.

High blood pressure usually has no signs or symptoms. That's why it is so dangerous. But it can be managed.

Nearly half of the American population over age 20 has HBP, and many don't even know it. Not treating high blood pressure is dangerous. It increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Make sure you get your blood pressure checked regularly and treat it the way your health care professional advises.

	(upper number)		(lower number)
(HYPERTENSION)			
(HYPERTENSION)			
(consult your doctor immediately)			

There are risk factors that increase your chances of developing HBP. Some you can control, and some you can't.

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American
Heart
Association.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.

Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at HeartInsight.org.

Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Take a few minutes to write down questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

Will I always have to take medicine?