

# HYPERTENSION



May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is when the pressure of blood in your blood vessels is higher than it should be. Hypertension is known as the silent killer because usually it has no signs or symptoms, and many people don't even know they have it. In fact, hypertension affects 1 in 3 Americans. Let's talk about some basic facts from the CDC.

1. High blood pressure may be linked to Dementia, a loss in cognition. A person who has uncontrolled hypertension during the ages 45-65 may have an increased risk of developing dementia.
2. Young people are affected with hypertension, as well as older adults. 1 in 4 men and 1 in 5 women between the ages of 35-44 has hypertension. It is the leading cause of stroke, which is on the rise in younger populations.
3. Hypertension usually has no symptoms which has earned it the name "the silent killer." If symptoms present, they can include headache and vomiting.
4. Many with high blood pressure don't even know they have it. Approximately 11 million U.S. adults are unaware they have hypertension and are not receiving any treatment for it.
5. Women and minorities face unique risks with regards to high blood pressure. Women with hypertension can have severe complications. Hypertension can cause kidney and organ damage, low birth weight, and early delivery. Some birth control medications can increase blood pressure. African American's have higher rates of high blood pressure than any other ethnic/cultural group and are more likely to be hospitalized due to it.

**So how does hypertension affect the body?** It hardens the arteries which decreases the flow of blood and oxygen to the heart, which causes heart disease. It can also lead to chest pain, heart failure (when the heart can't pump enough blood and oxygen to organs), and heart attack (when the blood supply is blocked and the heart muscle begins to die). High blood pressure can also burst or block arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the brain, causing a stroke.

Many things can contribute to the risk of hypertension such as genetics, lifestyle, medications, and other chronic diseases. The best road to prevention is to know your numbers. Get checked at least once a year if you don't currently have a diagnosis of hypertension, and every couple months if you do. There are many places you can have your blood pressure checked, for example, the doctor office, the automatic cuffs at the grocery store and pharmacy, and your local health department.

Here are the number ranges to be mindful of:

Less than 120/80	Healthy range
120/80-139/89	At risk for hypertension
140/90 and above	Hypertensive

**How do you keep your blood pressure in a healthy range?** If you do not currently have hypertension and want to work towards preventing it or if you want to lower your blood pressure, you can do so by eating a well-balanced diet that is low in sodium, be as active as possible, don't smoke, and limit alcohol consumption. It is also very important to speak with your health care provider and follow any recommendations they give you.

Here are some helpful video links regarding high blood pressure:

High Blood Pressure Basics:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=a3aC9BDpdA0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=a3aC9BDpdA0)

Treating High Blood Pressure:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=XbLmIoyDJuE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=XbLmIoyDJuE)

Vital Signs: Getting Blood Pressure Under Control:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=XOxQyO-Sw-g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=XOxQyO-Sw-g)

Also you may read the CDC full article regarding high blood pressure at:

<http://cdc.gov/features/highbloodpressure/index.htm>