

## **What Is Blood Pressure?**

Blood pressure is the pressure of the blood against the walls of the arteries.

Blood pressure results from two forces. One is created by the heart as it pumps blood into the arteries and through the circulatory system. The other is the force of the arteries as they resist the blood flow.

## **What Do Blood Pressure Numbers Indicate?**

The higher (systolic) number represents the pressure while the heart contracts to pump blood to the body.

The lower (diastolic) number represents the pressure when the heart relaxes between beats.

## **What Is High Blood Pressure?**

Hypertension is the medical term for high blood pressure. Blood pressure below 120/80 mmHg is considered optimal for adults. A systolic pressure of 120 to 139 mmHg or a diastolic pressure of 80 to 89 mmHg is considered "prehypertension" and needs to be watched carefully. A blood pressure reading of 140/90 or higher is considered elevated (high). The only way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked.

There is an exception to the above mentioned definition of high blood pressure. A blood pressure of 130/80 mmHg or higher is considered high blood in people with diabetes and chronic kidney disease.

## **What Causes High Blood Pressure?**

In many people with high blood pressure, a single specific cause is not known. This is called essential or primary high blood pressure.

In some people, high blood pressure is the result of another medical problem or medicine. When the cause is known, this is called secondary high blood pressure.

## **Blood Pressure Monitoring At Home**

Why should I monitor my blood pressure at home and keep a record of it?

Measuring your blood pressure at home and keeping a record of the measurements will show you and your doctor how much your blood pressure changes during the day. Your doctor can use the measurements to see how well your medicine is working to control your high blood pressure. Also, measuring your own blood pressure is a good way to take part in managing your health.

## **Proper Techniques In Taking Your Blood Pressure...**

- ✓ Rest 5 minutes before taking your blood pressure
- ✓ Don't smoke or drink caffeinated beverages for at least 30 minutes before taking your blood pressure
- ✓ Take your blood pressure before (not after) you eat
- ✓ Sit comfortably with your back supported and both feet on the floor (do NOT cross your legs)
- ✓ Elevate your arm to heart level on a table or a desk
- ✓ Use the proper sized cuff. It should fit smoothly and snugly around your bare upper arm. There should be enough room to slip a fingertip under the cuff. The bottom edge of the cuff should be 1 inch above the crease of the elbow.



Things you can do to lower high blood pressure, protect your heart and prevent strokes.

Circle each check as you decide to make any of these life style changes.

- ✓ I will quit smoking
- ✓ I will engage in physical activity most days of the week
- ✓ I will choose foods that are low in salt (sodium)
- ✓ I will know my blood pressure numbers
- ✓ I will know my blood pressure medications
- ✓ I will take my blood pressure medications as directed
- ✓ I will eat a diet low in saturated and trans fat
- ✓ I will monitor my blood pressure
- ✓ MY IDEAL BLOOD PRESSURE IS: \_\_\_\_\_