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MEDICAL FUND

Your health in caring hands

**HIGH BLOOD
PRESSURE**

What you need
to know

**BECAUSE....CARING
COMES NATURALLY TO US**

What is Blood Pressure ?

We all need blood pressure to stay alive. Without it, blood can't flow through our bodies to supply oxygen which is vital to our organs. Blood pressure is therefore how hard your heart needs to pump, in order to move blood round the body.

What is High Blood Pressure ?

Also called hypertension, high blood pressure occurs when your heart and arteries work harder than they should, to pump blood around your body.



How is High Blood Pressure measured ?

The process is painless. An inflatable cuff is placed around your upper arm. As it gets inflated it squeezes an artery, stopping the blood flow. When the cuff deflates, the next heartbeat is recorded by the machine and the pressure is then noted by the machine.

The pressure is also measured at its lowest point, between heartbeats. This is actually the 'resting' phase of your heartbeat.

The highest number is the systolic pressure and the lowest number is the diastolic pressure. Normal blood pressure is 120/80 mmHg.

What are the stages of High Blood Pressure ?

	STAGE 1 Mild	STAGE 2 Moderate	STAGE 3 Severe
Systolic	140-159 mmHg	160-179 mmHg	> 180 mmHg
Diastolic	90-99 mmHg	100-109 mmHg	> 110 mmHg

What is Primary Hypertension ?

Sometimes there is no specific reason for high blood pressure. This is called essential or primary hypertension. There are lifestyle issues that may increase your blood pressure. These include:



Obesity



Stress



Too much salt in your diet



Not enough regular exercise



Smoking, alcohol or illegal drug intake



Certain medications

What is Secondary Hypertension ?

Sometimes there's an existing medical condition that affects blood pressure, such as kidney disease or thyroid disorder, among others. This is then called secondary hypertension.

What are the symptoms of High Blood Pressure ?

In the early stages of high blood pressure, people may not experience any specific signs. Unfortunately it's only when the situation is severe that symptoms could present. They may include dizziness, headaches, vision changes, nosebleeds and nausea.

Are certain people more at risk of being diagnosed with High Blood Pressure ?

Yes the following groups are more at risk:



Older people:

as you get older, the effect of living an unhealthy lifestyle over the years can take its toll.



Family history & ethnicity:

people from certain racial origins, or with a family history of high blood pressure are more likely to be diagnosed with the condition.



Sex:

men are more likely to be affected than women.

Why should High Blood Pressure be treated ?

Uncontrolled high blood pressure increased your risk of other serious health problems, including heart attack and stroke.

How is High Blood Pressure treated ?

Medication would be prescribed by your doctor, based on how high your blood pressure is. This is then monitored on a regular basis to see how you respond to the medication and adjusted accordingly.

Is there anything I can do to lower my High Blood Pressure ?

Lifestyle changes could very well help to lower high blood pressure. These changes include:



Losing weight if you are overweight or obese



Eating healthier foods and cutting out saturated fats, and avoiding excessive salt intake



Getting more regular exercise



Stopping smoking



Cutting down on excessive drinking



Keeping your stress levels in check and indulging in a stress-reducing activity such as yoga or tai chi.

How often should I have my Blood Pressure checked ?

Your doctor should check your blood pressure at every visit, but you should have yours checked at least every year.

General references: http://kidshealth.org/teen/diseases_conditions/heart/hypertension.html; <http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/microsites/u40/Home/high/Hypertension>; <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/basics/definition/con-20019580>; <http://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/guide/blood-pressure-causes>

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