

# Care Gram

## Hypertension

### What Is Hypertension?

Hypertension means high blood pressure. Blood pressure measures the force pushing outwards on your vessels. The first force is the heart pumping blood into the arteries. The second force is the heart resting between beats.

### Risk Factors for Developing Hypertension

- Sodium (salt) intake
- Obesity (overweight)
- Inactive lifestyle
- Drinking alcohol
- Heredity
- Smoking
- Race
- Males
- Increasing age
- Diabetes, gout, and kidney disease
- Medications (steroids, ibuprofen, cold medicine, diet pills, and oral contraceptives)

Hypertension also can result from other conditions that involve the kidneys, heart, or endocrine (system of glands that secrete hormones) system.

### Symptoms of Hypertension

- Many people have high blood pressure and are unaware that it can be a “Silent Killer” with no symptoms.
- It does not mean being tense, nervous, or hyperactive – you can be calm and relaxed and still have high blood pressure.
- The best way to know is to have your blood pressure checked regularly as determined by your doctor.

### Blood Pressure Numbers

Blood pressure below 120/80 is best for adults.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC MM HG (UPPER NUMBER)		DIASTOLIC MM HG (LOWER NUMBER)
Normal	Less than 120	And	Less than 80
Elevated	120-129	And	Less than 80
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) – Stage 1	130-139	Or	80-89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) – Stage 2	140 or higher	Or	90 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis <b>Consult your doctor immediately.</b>	Higher than 180	And/or	Higher than 120



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## Prevention and Treatment

Uncontrolled blood pressure can lead to heart attack, heart failure, and stroke.

### Eat a heart healthy diet and reduce salt intake.

- Reduce salt (sodium) in your diet. Salt can raise blood pressure by causing your body to retain extra fluid.
  - Limit processed foods
  - Read labels and choose foods lower in sodium
  - Use seasoning instead of salt to flavor foods
- DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension)
  - Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat or fat-free dairy products

### Engage in regular physical activity.

Follow American Heart Association guidelines as listed. Your lungs, heart, and circulation will benefit most from moderate to vigorous aerobic activity.

- Aim for at least a total of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity (2 hours and 30 minutes) each week.
  - You can divide this weekly goal into 30-minute segments on at least 5 days a week.
  - Physical activity should be performed for at least 10 minutes at a time and spread throughout the week.
  - Include flexibility and stretching exercises.
  - Include muscle strengthening activity at least 2 days a week.

### Maintain a healthy weight.

- Lose weight if you are overweight. Losing as little as five to ten pounds may help lower your blood pressure.

### Manage stress.

- Although stress does not clearly cause heart disease, it can affect general wellness.

### Avoid tobacco smoke.

- While smoking has not been proven to cause high blood pressure, each cigarette you smoke increases your blood pressure for many minutes after you finish.

### Take all your medications as prescribed.

- Your doctor may have you take one or more pills to control your blood pressure.
- Medications work in different ways to lower blood pressure.
- Do not stop taking any medications on your own – the medications will keep your blood pressure normal.
- Even if you feel great, you still need to take your medications.
- Keep a record of when you take each medication.
  - Keeping track of your prescribed medications can be hard, especially if you are taking several different medications. Writing things down will make managing your medications a lot easier.

**If you cannot afford your medications, please contact our Prescription Assistance Program at (220) 564-4628.**

Limit alcohol intake.

Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure.

- If you drink, limit your alcohol intake to no more than two drinks per day for men and no more than one drink per day for women. A drink is defined as:
  - One 12 oz. beer
  - 4 oz. of wine
  - 1.5 oz. of 80-proof spirits
  - 1 oz. of 100-proof spirits

**When to Call the Doctor**

Ask your doctor when you should call the office with high blood pressure readings or when you should go to the Emergency Department.

**If you cannot reach your doctor, go the Emergency Department if you have:**

- Chest pain
- A marked increase in heart rate

**Signs of Heart Failure**

- A weight gain of 3 pounds in 3 days or less
- A new or increased shortness of breath
- For those with a history of high blood pressure – increased shortness of breath with activity during the day, when you lie down at night or awaken in the night
- Increased swelling of your ankles, feet, or stomach
- Increased tiredness and weakness

**Signs of a Stroke – Call 911 right away if you have:**

- Sudden onset of weakness and numbness
- Change in vision
- Change in balance
- Hard time speaking or swallowing
- A very bad headache