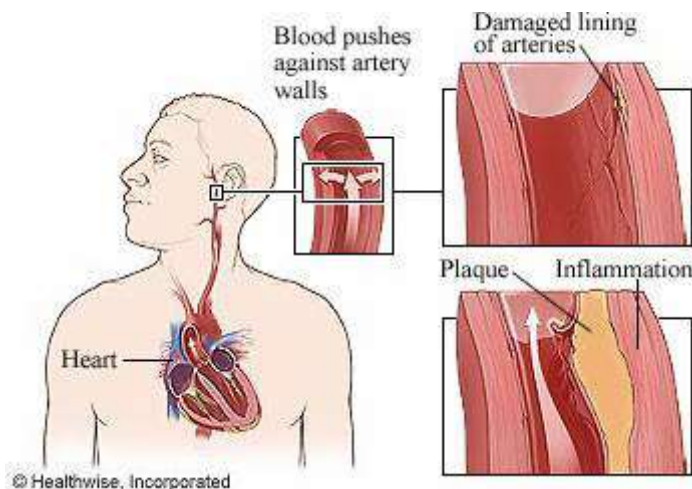


Learning About High Blood Pressure

What is high blood pressure?



Blood pressure is a measure of how hard the blood pushes against the walls of your arteries. It's normal for blood pressure to go up and down throughout the day. But if it stays up, you have high blood pressure. Another name for high blood pressure is hypertension.

Two numbers tell you your blood pressure. The first number is the systolic pressure (top number). It shows how hard the blood pushes when your heart is pumping. The second number is the diastolic pressure (bottom number). It shows how hard the blood pushes between heartbeats, when your heart is relaxed and filling with blood.

Your doctor will give you a goal for your blood pressure based on your health and your age. High blood pressure (hypertension) means that the top number stays high, or the bottom number stays high, or both.

High blood pressure increases the risk of stroke, heart attack, and other problems.

What happens when you have high blood pressure?

- Blood flows through your arteries with too much force. Over time, this can damage the heart and the walls of your arteries. But you can't feel it. High blood pressure usually doesn't cause symptoms.
- High blood pressure makes your heart work harder. And that can lead to heart failure, which means your heart doesn't pump as much blood as your body needs.
- Fat and calcium start to build up in your arteries. This buildup is called hardening of the arteries. It can cause many problems including a heart attack and stroke.
- Arteries also carry blood and oxygen to organs like your eyes, kidneys, and brain. If high blood pressure damages those arteries, it can lead to vision loss, kidney disease, stroke, and a higher risk of dementia.

How can you prevent high blood pressure?

- Stay at a healthy weight.
- Try to limit how much sodium you eat to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) a day. If you limit your sodium to 1,500 mg a day, you can lower your blood pressure even more.
 - Buy foods that are labeled "unsalted," "sodium-free," or "low-sodium." Foods labeled

- "reduced-sodium" and "light sodium" may still have too much sodium.
- Flavor your food with garlic, lemon juice, onion, vinegar, herbs, and spices instead of salt. Do not use soy sauce, steak sauce, onion salt, garlic salt, mustard, or ketchup on your food.
 - Use less salt (or none) when recipes call for it. You can often use half the salt a recipe calls for without losing flavor.
 - Be physically active. Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.
 - Limit alcohol to 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women.
 - Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products. Eat less saturated and total fats.

How is high blood pressure treated?

- Your doctor will suggest making lifestyle changes to help your heart. For example, your doctor may ask you to eat healthy foods, quit smoking, lose extra weight, and be more active.
- If lifestyle changes don't help enough, your doctor may recommend that you take medicine.
- When blood pressure is very high, medicines are needed to lower it.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Scan the QR code or Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/hcnmychart>



Enter **P501** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About High Blood Pressure.**"

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