

Ask *the* Expert

What is hypertension?

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Generally high blood pressure is defined as office readings of greater than 140/90 on two different visits or consistent home readings of greater than 135/85. One reading greater than 160/100 establishes the diagnosis of hypertension.

Does the 140/90 cutoff apply to everyone?

No. Recently the 8th Joint National Committee reported that Hypertension is defined at greater than 150 systolic or greater than 90 diastolic for patients 60 or older. This means that if one is over the age of 60 and does not have chronic kidney disease then his/her blood pressure should not be treated until systolic goes over 150 or diastolic over 90.

What is the systolic blood pressure?

The systolic blood pressure is the pressure generated on the blood vessels by the squeeze of the heart. This number is recorded as the top number. Systolic blood pressure usually increases with age.

What is the diastolic blood pressure?

The diastolic blood pressure is the pressure generated

by the elastic recoil of the blood vessels while the heart is resting. This number is recorded as the bottom number.

Which is worse a high diastolic or a high systolic?

They can be equally as bad, but the most dangerous type of hypertension is probably a very high systolic with a low diastolic blood pressure. This creates a wide pulse pressure that can put stress on the blood vessels. We do not know optimum systolic blood pressure in patients under the age of 60. We also do not know the optimum diastolic blood pressure in patients under the age of 30.

When should my blood pressure (BP) be treated?

Once the diagnosis of hypertension is established a patient should be treated. If BP is greater than 160/100 (stage 2 hypertension) on one occasion, the patient should start on therapy without the need for subsequent readings.

Why should hypertension be treated?

Hypertension places patients at risk for damage to the blood vessels in the heart, brain, eyes, and kidneys which could result in heart attacks or congestive heart failure, dementia or strokes, vision problems, and renal failure, respectively.

Do I need a high blood pressure specialist?

While most primary care doctors are very good at treating high blood pressure, a specialist may be required if a patient's blood pressure cannot be controlled on 3 medicines. Nephrologists, Endocrinologists, and Cardiologists generally have extra training in hypertension. Some doctors complete additional testing to be recognized as specialists in clinical hypertension by the American Society of Hypertension.

What medicines should be used?

Many people with hypertension will eventually need 2-3 medicines for control. Unless contraindicated by allergy or illness, most people will need a diuretic. The second medication choice will likely be tailored to one's specific diseases. Diabetics and kidney patients generally will need an ARB or an ACE Inhibitor. Heart failure patients will likely need a Beta Blocker and an ACE Inhibitor or ARB. A calcium channel blocker is often used for people with certain vascular diseases or as an addition to a diuretic, ACE Inhibitor or ARB. African Americans usually respond best to diuretics and calcium channel blockers. Methyldopa is usually first line for pregnant women. Other older medicines like clonidine, minoxidil, and terazosin are generally reserved

for resistant cases once all other options have been exhausted.

What can I do to help?

1. Exercise: 30 minutes of daily sustained aerobic activity can lower BP by as much as 10 points.
2. Low salt diet: salt intake causes vascular fullness that contributes to a higher BP. It also works against many of your blood pressure medicines
3. More fruits and vegetables: these foods contain a higher potassium content which acts to lower your BP.
4. Avoid bad habits: smoking, staying up late, excessive alcohol, and tobacco
5. Stress less: prayer, meditation, and quiet environments will lower BP.

NEA Baptist, a proud supporter of the national campaign Measure Up, Pressure Down, is participating in the call to action: Roll Up Your Sleeves Day, Thursday, May 15th.

As part of the day, NEA Baptist is offering free blood pressure screenings to the public from 10 am – 12 pm in the clinic lobby at the NEA Baptist Medial Campus, 4802 E. Johnson, Jonesboro. Educational materials and prizes will be available.



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NEA BAPTIST

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