

# HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE – OR HYPERTENSION

AS IT IS ALSO KNOWN –

IS A CONDITION THAT INCREASES YOUR CHANCES OF DEVELOPING SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS LIKE STROKE, HEART ATTACK, DEMENTIA AND KIDNEY DISEASE.

*(Source: MedicinesTalk)*

USUALLY THE ONLY WAY OF KNOWING THAT YOU HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE IS BY HAVING YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE TAKEN



Most people with high blood pressure don't feel sick or unwell, so they don't realize they have it. Indeed, high blood pressure is often said to be a "silent killer", because most people don't feel any symptoms until it has caused considerable damage to their bodies.

The silent nature of high blood pressure means that usually the only way of knowing that you have high blood pressure is by having your blood pressure taken – which is why doctors check your blood pressure periodically. How often it is checked depends on your age and situation.

## WHO NEEDS TREATMENT

You are regarded as having normal blood pressure if your blood pressure is 120/80 mmHg or less. This score is commonly referred to as 120 over 80. Generally you are regarded as having high blood pressure if your blood pressure is greater than 140/90 or 140 over 90.

If you have no other factors that make you more likely to develop heart disease, doctors usually recommend that you start treatment when your blood pressure is greater than 140/90 mmHg. However, if you have other conditions, such as diabetes or kidney disease, that make you more likely to develop heart disease, your doctor may recommend that you start treatment at a lower level of blood pressure.

## TREATMENT

For some people, lifestyle changes – such as losing weight, reducing the amount of salt in their food, exercising regularly and quitting smoking – are enough to reduce their blood pressure to normal levels. However for many people, lifestyle changes alone are not enough. They need to take blood pressure medicines long term – usually for the rest of their lives. Medicines for high blood pressure are also known as anti-hypertensives i.e. anti-high blood pressure medicines.

### MANY DIFFERENT MEDICINES

There are very many high blood pressure medicines. The one your doctor prescribes for you will depend on your individual situation.

Over time, you may need to increase the dose of the medicine, change to a different medicine, or add another medicine to keep your blood pressure under control.

If you experience any side effects, tell your doctor who will be able to prescribe another medicine or adjust the dosage so you don't experience the side effect.

When starting a new medicine, tell your Doctor and Pharmacist about all the medicines you are taking – including any you have bought without a prescription at a pharmacy, supermarket or health food store or over the internet – to ensure that you are not given a medicine that could interact with one of your existing medicines.



### TAKE EVERY DAY

It is important that you take your blood pressure medicines at the same time every day, even when your blood pressure has returned to normal, and even when you feel well, unless your doctor advises otherwise. If you stop taking them, your blood pressure will almost certainly rise again.

Some blood pressure medicines should be taken with food, while others should be taken on an empty stomach. Taking them the wrong way can lead to a marked drop in blood pressure which can cause dizziness and fainting.

High blood pressure tends to worsen with age, and you cannot tell if you have high blood pressure by the way you feel. It is essential that you take your blood pressure medicine every day and have your doctor check your blood pressure regularly if you are to keep it under control. ***Keeping your blood pressure at normal levels will reduce your chances of serious problems like heart disease and dementia.***

### MAINTAIN A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE TOO

Improving your lifestyle can reduce and sometimes even eliminate the need to take blood pressure medicines at all. These changes can help to reduce high blood pressure:

- Quitting smoking.
- Losing weight
- Reducing the amount of salt you eat in food.
- Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink (no more than one standard drink for women and two standard drinks for men on any day).
- Exercising for at least 30 minutes each day.