

Regular Doctor Visit for High Blood Pressure

What are the blood pressure numbers that I should be familiar with?

Normal blood pressure should ideally be less than 120/80mmHg for a healthy adult, unless otherwise told by your doctor. Blood pressure above 130/80mmHg is considered high.

Why is it important to have my health check-up and tests done?

High blood pressure is often called "the silent killer" because it rarely causes warning signs, even though it may cause serious damage to the body. If left untreated high blood pressure can lead to problems:

- Eyesight changes
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Kidney failure

What should my doctor check at each 6 month visit?

Your doctor should check the following to see how well your treatment is working and to watch for any possible problems with your heart, kidneys, or blood sugar.

- Blood pressure
- Smoking status
- Diet/Exercise
- Weight
- Labs (urine, cholesterol, fasting blood sugar, potassium, and sodium should be tested annually, every 12 months)

How should I get ready for my next appointment?

Wear a short-sleeved shirt to your appointment so the blood pressure cuff can fit around your arm properly. It is a good idea to bring a list of medications, herbs, and vitamin supplements you take to your doctor's appointment. This is because some medications such as those that are bought without a prescription, herbals and other supplements can raise your blood pressure. If you check your blood pressure at home, bring your readings to your visit for review by your doctor. Don't stop taking any prescription medications without your doctor's advice.

What might my doctor ask me to do to decrease my blood pressure?

- Follow a low salt diet
- Exercise daily
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables
- Lose weight
- Adopt healthy habits such as quitting smoking, drink less alcohol, and reduce stress in your life.
- Change a medication dose or add another medication. It is important to be honest with your doctor about how well you remember to take your blood pressure medications each day. The changes your doctor makes can be based on that information.

Reference: National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. Seventh Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Pressure. NIH Publication. August 2004. Sharma S, Kortas C. Hypertension. emedicine.medscape.com. Accessed 17 Aug 2009.