

What is High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure is also known as hypertension.

You may have heard this term before, but what does it mean? Let's look at how the heart works to understand.

Your heart pumps blood throughout your body, sending nutrients and vitamins to all your organs.

The heart's pumping action puts pressure on the blood to push it, moving it through your blood vessels.

Blood pressure is the measurement of how hard your blood is pushing against your blood vessel walls.

When you get your blood pressure checked, you will see two numbers.

The one on top measures the blood pressure when the heart pumps. The one on the bottom measures the blood pressure when the heart rests.

For most people, if your blood pressure is often 130 over 80 or higher, you have high blood pressure.

The higher your blood pressure gets, the more force is pushed against the walls.

This causes damage; and it can happen anywhere in the bloodstream.

Over time high blood pressure can damage the blood vessels to the point that it causes a heart attack, heart failure, a stroke, kidney disease, or eye disease.

That's why it's important to check your blood pressure on a regular basis.

Many factors raise your risk for high blood pressure, including:

Your family history. High blood pressure can be passed down from generation to generation.

Your age. Your risk increases as you get older.

Your gender. Before age 55, men are more likely than women to have high blood pressure. Women are more likely to develop it after menopause.

And your lifestyle. Being overweight, being inactive, not eating a heart-healthy diet, drinking too much alcohol, not getting healthy sleep, and smoking all increase your risk for high blood pressure.

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Even if you aren't at risk for high blood pressure, you can have it...there are usually no symptoms until it has caused serious problems.

High blood pressure can be damaging to your body without you even knowing it.

So have your blood pressure checked. And if you do have high blood pressure, make a plan with your healthcare provider to manage it.