

# Hypertension — High Blood Pressure

## What is High Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood against your artery walls as it circulates through your body. Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day, but it can cause health problems if it stays high for a long time. High blood pressure can lead to heart disease and stroke—leading causes of death in the United States.

## Risk Factors

Having certain medical conditions can increase your chances of developing high blood pressure. These conditions include:

- Prehypertension
- Diabetes

Unhealthy behaviors can also increase your risk for high blood pressure, especially for people who have one of the medical conditions listed above. Unhealthy behaviors include:

- Smoking tobacco
- Eating foods high in sodium and low in potassium
- Not getting enough physical activity
- Being obese
- Drinking too much alcohol

## Signs & Symptoms

High blood pressure usually has no warning signs or symptoms, so many people don't realize they have it. That's why it's important to visit your doctor regularly. Be sure to talk with your doctor about having your blood pressure checked.

## Treatment

If you have high blood pressure, your doctor may prescribe medication to treat it. Lifestyle changes, such as the ones listed above, can be just as important as taking medicines. Talk with your doctor about the best ways to reduce your risk for high blood pressure.

