



High Blood Pressure

September 2024

A health condition that's easy to miss

What Is High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure (also called hypertension) happens when the force of blood pushing through the blood vessels is too strong.

Doctors check blood pressure with a cuff around your arm. The test gives two numbers:

- Top number (systolic pressure): how hard the heart is pumping blood
- Bottom number (diastolic pressure): how much pressure is in the blood vessels when the heart is resting

For adults, a reading over 120/80 is considered too high. For kids, normal numbers depend on their age and sex. Your child's doctor knows what numbers are normal.

Sometimes, people have high blood pressure at the doctor's office just because they are nervous. This is called white coat hypertension. To be sure, blood pressure should be checked three different times in a calm setting.

What Are the Symptoms?

Most people with high blood pressure feel no symptoms. If symptoms do happen, they may include:

- Mild headaches
- Feeling tired

Why Is It Dangerous?

High blood pressure can lead to:

- Heart attacks
- Strokes
- A shorter life, if it's not treated

*That's why it's important to check
and treat it.*

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Do People with Spina Bifida Have Higher Risk?

Yes. Children and adults with Spina Bifida may have a higher chance of having high blood pressure. The exact reason is unknown, but it may be linked to other health problems like kidney issues or other risk factors.

What Increases the Risk of High Blood Pressure?

Things you can't change:

- Family history
- Age
- Race
- Sex

Things you can change (called modifiable risk factors):

- Being overweight
- Eating too much salt
- Sleep problems like sleep apnea
- Stress
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Smoking
- High cholesterol

How Is High Blood Pressure Treated?

Doctors first try to find out why the blood pressure is high. Then they suggest:

Healthy habits: • Eat less salt • Lose weight if needed • Manage stress • Exercise regularly • Avoid alcohol and smoking	Medicine: Some people will need medicine to control their blood pressure. There are different types of medicines, and the doctor will choose the one that's best. • Adults are usually treated by doctors in Internal Medicine or Cardiology • Children may be treated by Pediatric Cardiologists or Kidney specialists (Nephrologists)
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This information does not constitute medical advice for any individual. As specific cases may vary from the general information presented here, SBA advises readers to consult a qualified medical or other professional on an individual basis.