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HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE FACT SHEET

The heart pumps blood into the arteries and through the circulatory system. Blood pressure is created by the heart as it pushes blood into the arteries and through the circulatory system. It's measured in the arteries and is recorded as two numbers, such as 122/78.

Systolic pressure is the top, larger number. It's generated by the contraction of the heart. Diastolic pressure is the bottom, smaller number. It's the pressure in the arteries while the heart is filling and resting between heartbeats.

Medical scientists have determined a normal range for blood pressure after studying the blood pressure of many people. Individuals whose blood pressure is consistently higher than this norm are said to have high blood pressure or "hypertension".

This Chart Should Be Considered General

Pressure	Systolic	Dialostic
<i>Normal</i>	139 or Less	(over) 89 or Less
<i>Borderline</i>	140 to 159	(over) 90 to 94
<i>High</i>	160 or more	(over) 95 or more

High blood pressure indicates the heart is straining to pump blood through the arteries. It's unhealthy because:

The heart can become enlarged (congestive heart failure).

The arteries can become scarred and less elastic (atherosclerosis). Hardened, narrowed arteries may be unable to carry the amount of blood the body's organs and tissues need.

Blood clots form or lodge in a narrowed artery. Blood clots are one of several causes of heart attacks and strokes.

---1.5 million Americans suffer a heart attack every year, and about 490,000 Americans die of heart attacks annually.

---500,000 Americans suffer a stroke every year, and more than 145,000 American die of strokes annually.

In about 10% of the cases, high blood pressure is a symptom of an underlying medical problem. In these cases, when the root cause is corrected, blood pressure usually returns to normal. In 90% of the cases, the cause of high blood pressure is unknown.

Uncontrollable factors

Age: The older a person gets, the more likely he or she is to develop high blood pressure.

Race: Blacks have high blood pressure more often than whites. The disease also tends to be more severe in blacks.

Heredity: A tendency toward high blood pressure seems to run in families.

Sex: Men are more likely to develop high blood pressure than women.

individuals.

Controllable factors

Obesity: Because of the clear relationship between obesity and blood pressure, all obese hypertensive adults should participate in weight reduction programs with goal body weight being within 15% of the desirable body weight.

Sodium consumption: Reducing sodium consumption can lower blood pressure in some people.

Alcohol consumption: More than one ounce of alcohol a day may increase blood pressure in some individuals.

Oral contraceptives: Women who take oral contraceptives may develop high blood pressure.

Lack of exercise: A sedentary lifestyle contributes to obesity.

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms: Many people have high blood pressure for years without knowing it. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, congestive heart failure, kidney failure, etc. The only way to tell whether someone has high blood pressure is to perform a quick, painless test using a sphygmomanometer. A sphygmomanometer consists of a gauge, and a rubber cuff that's placed around the arm or leg and inflated.

The most common treatments for high blood pressure are:

***Losing weight** (in the case of overweight people)

***Reducing** intake of salt (sodium)

***Exercise**

***Medication** is usually prescribed in moderate-to-severe cases. A trial period is often required before the best medication or combination of medications is discovered. It's extremely important to follow instructions exactly whenever medication has been prescribed.

Statistics on high blood pressure treatment:

*46% of the people with high blood pressure don't know they have it.

*21% are aware of their condition but aren't on medication.

*22% are on medication but their condition is inadequately controlled.

*11% are on medication and are receiving adequate therapy.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE REFERENCE

Definition

*High blood pressure in adults is a consistently elevated blood pressure of 140mm Hg (millimeters of mercury) systolic and/or 90 mm Hg diastolic or higher.

*The first number in the 140/90 measurement (140) is the systolic pressure---the pressure in the arteries caused by the heart's contraction. The second measurement (90) is the diastolic pressure. It's the pressure in the arteries when the heart is resting between heartbeats.

Statistics

*More than 63 million Americans ages six and above have high blood pressure

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*Besides claiming more than 32,000 American lives in 1990, high blood pressure is also indirectly responsible for many more deaths and cases of disability resulting from heart attack, stroke and kidney failure.

*According to recent estimates, in U.S. adults aged 18-74, 33 percent of white males, 38 percent of black males, 25 percent of white females, and 39 percent of black females have high blood pressure.

Risks

- High blood pressure is particularly prevalent in blacks, middle-aged and elderly people, obese people, heavy drinkers, women who take oral contraceptives, and people with diabetes mellitus, gout or kidney disease.
- Certain drugs(such as amphetamines, diet pills) tend to raise blood pressure.
- Blood pressure increases while a person smokes cigarettes.

General Information

High blood pressure adds to the workload of the heart and arteries, which may contribute to stroke, heart attack, kidney failure and congestive heart failure. There is accumulating evidence that lowering blood pressure reduces the risk of stroke and coronary heart disease.

The prevalence of high blood pressure probably could be reduced if people ate less salt. On the average, Americans consume 10-15 times more sodium than they need. Much of this excess sodium is added as people cook and season their food at the table, although eating large amounts of fast food and processed food is another way people introduce high amounts of sodium into their diet. High levels of sodium are also found in many over-the-counter remedies.

Drugs for high blood pressure fall into five categories: diuretics, sympathetic (adrenergic) inhibitors, vasodilators, calcium channel blockers, and enzyme inhibitors. Diuretics lower blood pressure by eliminating excess fluid (salt and water) from the body. Adrenergic inhibitors (which include beta blockers) curb the nerve impulses to the heart, blood vessels or both, and cause the heart rate to decrease and/or the blood vessels to relax. Vasodilators lessen the pressure on blood vessels by causing them to relax (and therefore expand). Calcium channel blockers can also cause the blood vessels to relax. Finally, enzyme inhibitors prevent the formation of a hormone that can increase blood pressure.