

How You Can Prevent Hypertension

What is Hypertension?

Hypertension is also known as **high blood pressure**. It's diagnosed on a case-to-case basis but the standard guidelines suggest you may have hypertension if your **systolic number is consistently over 130 and your diastolic number consistently above 80 (130/80)**.



Signs & Symptoms

You may not show any symptoms of hypertension. However, if you do show warning signs, they often follow eating an unhealthy or salty meal and may include:

- **Frequent headaches**
- **Blurred vision**
- **Chest discomfort**
- **Erectile dysfunction**

Causes

Your health and lifestyle choices have the greatest impact on hypertension. Some common risk factors include:

- **Age:** High blood pressure is more common as you age, particularly after age 65.
- **Race:** Hypertension disproportionately affects the African American and Black communities in the United States. The OMH reports that African Americans are 40% more likely to develop hypertension in comparison to non-Hispanic white people.
- **Family History:** High blood pressure can be genetic, so it's important to be aware of your family history.
- **Being Overweight or Obese:** More weight requires more blood to distribute nutrients and oxygen throughout the body, which increases pressure on artery walls and causes hypertension over time.
- **Lack of Physical Activity:** Not exercising increases the risk of becoming overweight or obese. Also, inactive people tend to have higher heart rates, meaning your heart is working harder, thus raising blood pressure levels.
- **Tobacco Use:** The chemicals in tobacco also damage the lining of your arteries, causing them to narrow and induce high blood pressure.
- **Eating Excess Sodium:** Eating too much sodium can cause your body to retain fluid, increasing blood pressure levels.
- **Low-Potassium Diet:** Potassium balances the sodium in your cells; without it, it can build in the body and increase one's risk of developing hypertension.
- **Drinking Excess Alcohol:** Drinking in excess can damage your heart over time and affect your blood pressure levels.
- **Stress:** Living with chronic stress can increase your blood pressure.

Reducing Your Risk

Maintain a healthy lifestyle.

- **No smoking.**
- **Drink in moderation.**
- **Manage stress.**
- **Eat a proper diet low in fats and sodium.**
- **Regularly engage in exercise.**



Visit Your Doctor Regularly

Regular check-ups help you monitor your blood pressure levels and stay aware of other factors affecting your health.