



High Blood Pressure Awareness Month

What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force that your blood creates on the walls of the arteries in your body. High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a term we use when that force is higher than it should be. Typically, blood pressure is stated using a fraction. The top number of that fraction is called systolic pressure. It is the pressure on the arteries when the heart beats. The bottom number represents diastolic pressure. It is the pressure between heartbeats, when the heart is resting. When a person's systolic and/or diastolic numbers are too high, they are "hypertensive" or have high blood pressure.

What do the numbers mean?

Category	Systolic (top number)		Diastolic (bottom number)
Normal blood pressure	Less than 120	And	Less than 80
If the top or bottom number of your blood pressure falls in the range below, you are at a higher risk for health problems.			
Pre-hypertension	120-139	Or	80-89
High blood pressure			
Stage 1	140-159	Or	90-99
Stage 2	160 or higher	Or	100 or higher

Causes of high blood pressure

High blood pressure can come from a variety of sources, including:

- Stress
- Age
- Higher body weight
- Unhealthy diet
- Family history

Treatment and prevention of high blood pressure

Treatment and prevention of high blood pressure is very important. The first step in treatment and prevention is to get screened. If you have been diagnosed with pre-hypertension or high blood pressure, there are some simple tips to help manage and reduce blood pressure:

- Take all medications as prescribed even if you feel better; if you are experiencing any side effects, speak with your doctor
- Exercise regularly
- Limit salt intake
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Minimize alcohol use
- Quit smoking

Check out [HAP's Health Library](#) for more information and resources related to high blood pressure.