

High Blood Pressure 101

What is hypertension?

Blood pressure (BP) is the force of blood against the walls of your blood vessels. This pressure rises and falls throughout the day and night. However, if your BP stays high over time, it's called hypertension.

High BP makes your heart work harder to push blood through your body. This can cause small tears in the arteries, which heal by forming scar tissue. You may not feel anything, but over time your arteries may become smaller as the scar tissue builds up and traps fat and cholesterol particles called plaque. This plaque makes it more difficult for the blood to get through your arteries and reach your heart, brain, and other vital organs.

How is BP measured?

BP is measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg) using 2 numbers.

120
/
80

Systolic BP is the top number and shows the force of the blood on your arteries as your heart beats.

Diastolic BP is the bottom number and measures the BP when your heart relaxes between beats.

The 2 numbers are your overall BP. For example, 125/80 mm Hg is read as 125 over 80.

- Normal BP is a reading of less than 120/80 mm Hg
- High BP is a reading of 140/90 mm Hg or higher
- If you have other conditions, such as diabetes or kidney disease, your goals may be different. So, be sure to talk to your doctor



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