

patients, increased exercise, limited salt intake (such as recommended in the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension [DASH] diet), and avoidance of stress and smoking, carry no risk and should be instituted as first-line therapy except in severe cases in which pharmacologic therapy may be indicated as well.

Drug therapy is instituted with caution in children with significant elevations of BP despite lifestyle modification. The treatment should begin with one drug with additional drug added if control is not obtained. The classes of oral antihypertensive drugs used in children include the β -blockers, ACE inhibitors, calcium channel blockers, angiotensin-receptor blockers, and diuretics. The goal is to achieve a normotensive state without accompanying drug side effects.

Nursing Care Management

BP measurement should be a part of the routine assessment of children older than 3 years old and patients younger than 3 years old who are considered to be at high risk for hypertension. To obtain an accurate reading, care is taken to quiet the child or relax the adolescent while the measurement is recorded to avoid false readings caused by excitement. BP should be measured in the sitting position with the arm at the level of the heart. Initial evaluation should also include four extremity pressures (in the supine position) to rule out coarctation of the aorta. The chief cause of falsely elevated BP readings is the use of improperly fitting, narrow cuffs. Therefore, attention to correct measurement technique is essential (see [Blood Pressure, Chapter 4](#)).

Education aimed at understanding hypertension and its implication over the life span is essential in promoting patient and family compliance with both nonpharmacologic and pharmacologic therapies (see [Compliance, Chapter 20](#)).

Ambulatory/home BP measurements can facilitate surveillance in youngsters being assessed for hypertension or can document the effectiveness of therapy for those being treated for chronic hypertension. In addition, a family member can be instructed in how to take and record accurate BP measurements, thus decreasing the number of trips to a health care facility. This individual needs to have parameters, above which they should contact the practitioner. In addition, the school nurse can often be a valuable resource in