

hypertension

What is high blood pressure?

- High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a condition in which the blood vessels have persistently raised pressure, increasing the pumping function of the heart.
- Normal levels of both systolic and diastolic blood pressure are particularly important for the efficient function of vital organs such as the heart, brain and kidney and for overall health and well-being.

Blood pressure levels

High

Systolic: more than 130 mmHg

Diastolic: more than 80 mmHg

Cause:

The primary reason behind high blood pressure is the increased workload on the heart and blood vessels; making them work harder and less efficiently.

There are two types of high blood pressure that develop due to different causes:

- Primary (essential) hypertension (it has no identifiable cause):

This type of high blood pressure is more common and it tends to develop gradually over many years.

- Secondary hypertension (it is caused by other conditions, such as):
 1. Kidney problems or hormonal problems.
 2. Thyroid problems.
 3. Obstructive sleep apnea
 4. Congenital blood vessel abnormalities.
 5. Certain medications.
 6. Taking drugs or alcohol.



What are the risk factors for high blood pressure?

- Behavioral and lifestyle-related factors can put people at a higher risk for developing high blood pressure. These factors include tobacco use, unhealthy diet and excessive use of salt, physical inactivity, overweight and obesity and harmful use of alcohol.
- Blood pressure tends to rise as people get older, thus everyone's risk for hypertension increases with age
- Hypertension can be hereditary. People can inherit genes that make them more likely to develop the condition. The risk of high blood pressure increases when hereditary factors are combined with unhealthy lifestyle choices.

Symptoms:

Most people with high blood pressure show no obvious signs or symptoms to indicate that something is wrong, even if their blood pressure readings are dangerously high, but some people may exhibit certain symptoms such as:

- Headache.
- Shortness of breath.
- Nosebleeds.

However, these signs and symptoms aren't indicative of a specific condition, and they usually don't occur until high blood pressure has reached a severe or a life-threatening stage.

When to see a doctor?

It is advisable to ask your doctor for a blood pressure reading at least once every two years starting at age 18 if any of the risk factors apply to you.

Prevention:

Leading a healthy lifestyle is one of the most important ways to prevent and control blood pressure; this includes:

- Exercising regularly.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Maintaining a healthy well-balanced diet.
- Managing stress and anxiety.
- Refraining from smoking and consuming alcohol.
- Reducing caffeine intake.

