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High Blood Pressure

Overview

Many people mistakenly believe that high blood pressure is more common among men. The truth is nearly half of all adults with high blood pressure are women. Having high blood pressure increases your risk of heart disease, the No. 1 killer of women.

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, but it raises the risk of stroke, heart attack, heart failure and kidney failure. It truly is a "silent killer." No one knows exactly what causes most cases of high blood pressure. It usually can't be cured, but it can be managed. Not treating high blood pressure is dangerous. Make it your mission to fight heart disease by treating and controlling high blood pressure.

Groups at Risk

Science from the American Heart Association has shown that some people are at higher risk of having high blood pressure. They include:

- People with close blood relatives who have high blood pressure.
- African-Americans
- People over age 35
- Overweight people
- People who aren't physically active
- People who use too much salt
- People who drink too much alcohol
- People with diabetes, gout or kidney disease
- Pregnant women
- Women who take birth control pills and who are overweight, had high blood pressure during pregnancy, have a family history of high blood pressure or have mild kidney disease

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic mm Hg (upper #)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower #)
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80
Prehypertension	120-139	or	80-89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	140-159	or	90-99
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	160 and higher	or	100 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (Emergency care needed)	Higher than 180	or	Higher than 110

TIPS

- Eating right is key to preventing and managing high blood pressure, so watch the salt. Follow the American Heart Association's recommendation to keep your sodium intake to 1,500 mg or less each day.
- Avoid stress by finding ways to control your thoughts such as yoga, walking or meditation.
- If you drink, limit alcohol. Keep in mind that for women, moderate drinking is no more than one drink per day.

Learn more about blood pressure and heart disease at heart.org.