

BLOOD**HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**
Facts and risk factors|| **PART 1**

HIGH blood pressure is a common and dangerous condition. Having high blood pressure means the pressure of blood in your blood vessels is higher than it should be.

But you can take steps to control your blood pressure and lower your risk for heart disease and stroke. About one in three adults suffers from high blood pressure, but only approximately half (54%) of these people have their blood pressure under control.

Many young people are also being diagnosed with high blood pressure. This common condition increases the risk for heart disease and stroke, two of the leading causes of death.

Some quick facts on high blood pressure:

High blood pressure is called the “silent killer” as there are often no warning signs or symptoms, and many people do not know they actually suffer from this problem. That’s why it is important to check your blood pressure regularly.

The good news is that steps can be taken to prevent high blood pressure or if one already suffers from high blood pressure, it is possible to control it.

**High blood pressure – Facts**

- First heart attack: about seven in every 10 people suffering from their first heart attack have high blood pressure.
- First stroke: about eight in every 10 people suffering their first stroke have high blood pressure.
- Chronic heart failure: about seven in every 10 people with chronic heart disease have high blood pressure.
- Kidney disease is also a major risk factor due to high blood pressure.

Conditions that increase the risk for high blood pressure

Pre-hypertension – Pre-hypertension is blood pressure that is slightly higher than normal.

Pre-hypertension increases the risk of developing chronic, or long-lasting, high blood pressure in the future.

If blood pressure is between 120/80 mmHg and 139/89 mmHg, one is considered as being in the pre-hypertension range.

Diabetes. Diabetes mellitus also increases the risk of heart disease. Your body needs glucose (sugar) for energy. Insulin is a hormone which originates in the pancreas and assists in glucose obtained from food to reach the body’s cells. When one suffers from diabetes, the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, and the amount it does produce is not enough. This will increase sugar level in the blood. About 60% of

people who suffer from diabetes also have high blood pressure. Talk to your doctor about ways to manage diabetes and control other risk factors.

Behaviour that increases the risk of high blood pressure

Unhealthy diet – A diet that is too high in sodium and too low in potassium puts you at risk for high blood pressure. Eating too much sodium (present in table salt) increases blood pressure. Most of the sodium we eat comes from processed and restaurant food. Not eating enough potassium can also increase blood pressure. Potassium is found in bananas, potatoes, beans and yoghurt.

Physical inactivity – Not getting enough physical exercise can result in weight gain, which can lead to high blood pressure.

Obesity – Obesity is excess body fat. Obesity is linked to higher levels of “bad” cholesterol and triglyceride levels and to lower levels of “good” cholesterol. In addition to high blood pressure, obesity can also lead to heart disease and diabetes. Talk to your healthcare team about

a plan aimed at reducing your weight to a healthy level.

Too much alcohol – Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure; women should have no more than one drink a day and men should have no more than two drinks a day.

Tobacco – Smoking increases the risk for high blood pressure. Cigarette smoking can damage the heart and blood vessels. Also, nicotine raises blood pressure, and carbon monoxide reduces the amount of oxygen that your blood can carry.

Family history and other characteristics that increase the risk for high blood pressure

Genetics and family history – When family traits are passed on from generation to a family member through the genes, that process is called heredity. Genetic factors are likely to play some role in high blood pressure, heart disease, and other related conditions. However, it is also likely that people with a family history of high blood pressure share common environments and other potential factors that

increase their risk. The risk for high blood pressure can increase even more when heredity combines with an unhealthy lifestyle, such as cigarette smoking and an unhealthy diet.

Other characteristics – Both men and women can have high blood pressure. Some other characteristics that one cannot control are age, race, or ethnicity which can affect the risk for high blood pressure.

Age – Because your blood pressure tends to rise as you get older, your risk for high blood pressure increases with age.

Sex – Women are about as likely as men to develop high blood pressure at some point during their lives.

Race or ethnicity – African people develop high blood pressure more often and earlier in life when compared to Europeans, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, or Natives from Alaska.

BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS

Normal	Systolic: less than 120 mmHg Diastolic: less than 80 mmHg
At risk (pre-hypertension)	Systolic: 120-139 mmHg Diastolic: 80-89 mmHg
High	Systolic: 140 mmHg or higher Diastolic: 90 mmHg or higher