



EmblemHealth[®]

WHAT CARE FEELS LIKE.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure is the amount of blood your heart pumps and the force that your arteries resist blood flow, stated in numbers. If your arteries become narrow, your blood pressure will go up because your heart will need to work harder to pump blood through your body. This is high blood pressure or hypertension.

If high blood pressure continues for a long time, the heart and arteries may not work as well as they should. This can also affect other parts of the body, including the kidneys, eyes and brain. Your doctor may prescribe a daily medicine to help control high blood pressure.

Every person needs blood pressure to live. Without it, blood wouldn't be able to move through the body. Blood pressure can change from minute to minute and is affected by your activity level, temperature, diet, emotional state, posture and medicines.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Many people do not realize they have high blood pressure because it often does not have any signs.

Common signs may include:

- Headaches
- Being tired or confused
- Eyesight problems
- Chest pain
- Finding it hard to breath
- Heartbeat that is not normal
- Blood in the urine

How is it found?

Your doctor should check your blood pressure at every office visit. This is most often done with an arm cuff and stethoscope (a tool used to listen to the sounds made by the heart).

What increases the chance of having high blood pressure?

Things that can increase the chance of high blood pressure include:

- Age
- Race
- Family history
- Being overweight
- Excessive alcohol use
- Smoking and tobacco use
- Too much salt in your diet
- Stress
- Having certain diseases
- Not being physically active

How is it treated?

The doctor may have you make lifestyle changes to lower your blood pressure as a first step.

These changes can include:

- Losing weight
- Quitting smoking
- Eating a healthy diet that calls for more fruits, vegetables and low fat dairy products and less saturated and total fat.
- Lowering the amount of sodium (salt) in your diet.
- Getting regular aerobic exercise such as a brisk walk of at least 30 minutes a day, several days a week.
- Limiting alcohol to two drinks a day for men, one drink a day for women.

If changing your lifestyle does not lower your blood pressure, a blood pressure medicine may also be needed.

Is it OK to skip a dose of blood pressure medicine?

You need to take your medicine every day to help lower your chance of having long-term effects from high blood pressure. If you are finding it hard to take your medicine on time, see the “Hints to Help You Remember to Take Your Medicine” in this pamphlet or talk to your doctor.

What can happen if high blood pressure is not controlled?

If you are skipping doses of your medicine or do not follow your doctor’s plan to treat your blood pressure, you may increase your chance of:

- Heart attack or stroke
- Heart failure
- Kidney failure
- Death

The medicine your doctor prescribed can help lower your high blood pressure. But if you don't take your medicine exactly as your doctor ordered you increase your chance of having heart disease, kidney failure or stroke.

This pamphlet can help you get the most out of your medicine. Read the hints below and go over the "Questions for Your Doctor" during your next office visit.

HINTS TO HELP YOU REMEMBER TO TAKE YOUR MEDICINE

- Make taking your blood pressure medicine part of your daily routine. Use a pillbox to store your medicine and leave it where you brush your teeth to help you remember to take your medicine.
- Set the alarm on your watch, clock or cell phone to help remind you to take your medicine at the right time.
- Some medicines work better when taken with food while others do not. If your medicine should be taken with food, keep it on the kitchen counter as a reminder to take it with your meal.
- Ask a friend or family member to call you to help remind you to take your medicine. It's a great way to stay in touch too!

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

1. Why am I taking this medicine and how will it help my blood pressure? _____

2. How often and at what times of the day should I take this medicine? _____

3. What should I do if I miss a dose? _____

4. Should I take all the medicine even though I feel fine? _____

5. How can I tell if this medicine is working? Are there any tests I need while taking this medicine? _____

6. Are there any side effects from this medicine? _____

7. How long will I need to take this medicine? Do I need a refill? _____

8. Does my prescription drug plan cover this medicine? Is there a generic option available? _____

9. Can I get a 90-day supply? Can I order this medicine through the mail? _____

If you have questions about your prescription drug coverage, we can help. Visit **www.emblemhealth.com/pharmacy** or call Customer Service at the phone number on the back of your ID card.

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