

# Blood Pressure Screening Fact Sheet

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Today your blood pressure is \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions please call 645-7700, ext. 4249

**What is blood pressure?**

Blood pressure measures the force of blood flowing through the blood vessels. It's measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg) and includes two numbers. The top number, called the systolic pressure, is the pressure in the arteries when the heart contracts (beats), forcing the blood out to supply it to all parts of the body. The bottom number, called the diastolic pressure, is the pressure in the arteries as the heart relaxes allowing the blood to enter the heart.

**American Heart Association recommended blood pressure levels:\***

<b>BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY</b>	<b>SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)</b>	<b>and/or</b>	<b>DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)</b>
<b>NORMAL</b>	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
<b>ELEVATED</b>	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1</b>	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2</b>	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
<b><u>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)</u></b>	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

\*For more information visit [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

**What is high blood pressure?**

High blood pressure, or hypertension, happens when the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries is too high. It's a common disease, but many people don't know they have it. The best way to know is to *get your blood pressure checked by a health care provider.*

continued



Atlantic County Executive  
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# Blood Pressure Screening Fact Sheet (continued)



## What causes high blood pressure?

Changes in the body's normal functions which could be genetic or environmental may cause high blood pressure. Some of these changes may be kidney fluid and salt imbalances, hormonal disorders, pregnancy, prescription medication like birth control pills, over the counter medication like cold relief medicine and unhealthy lifestyle habits like a diet high in sodium, drinking excess amounts of alcohol, and a lack of physical activity.

## Who is at risk?

Blood pressure tends to rise with age but lately it's increasing in children and teens, possibly due to the rise in the number of overweight children and teens. It's more common in African American adults than in other racial backgrounds in the United States. Those with unhealthy lifestyle habits and those who do not manage their stress well are more likely to develop high blood pressure. Those with a family history of high blood pressure as well as people middle-aged and older are at risk too.

## What are the dangers for people with high blood pressure?

Many complications and body damage can occur when blood pressure remains high. Some of these are aneurysms, chronic kidney disease, brain changes, eye damage, heart attack, and heart failure. If you have high blood pressure it puts you at risk for heart disease and stroke, which are the top two leading causes of death in the United States.

## What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

Most people with high blood pressure have no symptoms. For this reason high blood pressure is called the "silent killer". The only way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure taken. Measure your blood pressure regularly. The procedure is quick and painless. You can have your blood pressure checked at a doctor's office, clinic, pharmacy or at home.

## How is high blood pressure treated?

Treatment for high blood pressure may require healthy lifestyle changes like adopting a low salt diet, moderate exercise, losing weight, quitting smoking, and reducing alcohol consumption. If you still have high blood pressure, your health care provider may prescribe medications together with healthy lifestyle changes. Healthy behaviors can lower your risk for high blood pressure, too.

\*For more information visit [www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure](http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure)



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