



QUESTIONS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ANSWERS

Hypertension

Hypertension is the medical name for high blood pressure. The heart pumps blood to the blood vessels. The vessels carry blood to all parts of the body. The force of the blood against the vessel walls is called blood pressure. Your blood pressure reading is a measure of this pressure. When that reading goes above a certain number it is called **high blood pressure** or **hypertension**. Blood pressure readings have 2 numbers:

- The first number is the pressure in the vessels when the heart is pumping. This number is called the **systolic** (say: sis-tall-ick) pressure.
- The second number is the pressure in the vessels when the heart is at rest. This number is called the **diastolic** (say: di-as-tall-ick) pressure.

Hypertension needs to be treated. It can cause serious problems such as:

- stroke
- heart attacks
- heart and kidney failure
- eye problems, and more

There are rarely any signs that you have hypertension. This is why you need to have your blood pressure checked often.

Where to Get Your Blood Pressure Checked

- You should get your blood pressure checked when you see your doctor.

- Some drug stores and supermarkets have blood pressure machines that you can use.
- Many hospitals and healthcare groups have health fairs where they offer blood pressure tests.
- You can buy a blood pressure kit to use at home.

Tips for Having Your Blood Pressure Checked

- Blood pressure is most often checked on your arm. Wear short sleeves so your arm is bare.
- Do not smoke or drink coffee for 30 minutes before the test.

Go to the bathroom and pee (urinate) before the test. This can make a difference in your blood pressure.

Who is Most at Risk for Hypertension?

- people over age 35
- Middle-aged and elderly. More than half of all Americans over 65 have hypertension
- African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics
- overweight people
- heavy alcohol drinkers
- people with Diabetes
- women after change of life (menopause)
- women using birth control pills
- women in the last 3 months of pregnancy

How to Control or Prevent Hypertension

Hypertension cannot be cured. It can be managed with good health habits. Here are some tips:

- See your doctor. Talk about the best treatment for you.
- Watch your weight. If you need to lose weight, do it slowly.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Avoid salty foods such as:
 - prepared foods
 - canned soups
 - cured meats (hot dogs, lunch meat, bacon, ham, canned meat)

- food from fast food restaurants
- Avoid fatty foods.
 - Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Exercise every day.
- Stop smoking.
- Take high blood pressure medicine as your doctor orders.

How can I find a Doctor?

St. Vincent Charity Hospital has doctors who have special training in heart problems. To contact one of our doctors call the:

Physician Referral Line at 1-800-223-8662

Visit our Web site at www.stvincentcharity.com

Our doctors serve with a deep respect for all. Their goal is to give the best care and education whether or not a person can pay.

St. Vincent Charity Hospital St. Luke's Health Care Center

2351 E. 22nd Street

Cleveland, Ohio 44115

216-861-6200

TTY: Ohio Relay 1-800-750-075

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Cleveland, Ohio 44104

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