

# Blood Pressure Safety

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is called a “silent killer” because it usually has no warning signs. However, it can lead to life-threatening conditions, such as heart attack or stroke, so it’s important to understand what it means and what you can do to reduce your risk.



The only way to know for sure that you have hypertension is to have a blood pressure test, so speak with your doctor to get screened and discuss your risk.

In a healthy individual, normal blood flow delivers nutrients and oxygen to all parts of the body. The beating heart helps push blood through a vast network of large and small blood vessels that constantly adjust to the body’s needs by becoming narrower or wider to maintain healthy blood pressure and keep blood flowing.

Time of day, exercise, diet, stress and other factors affect your blood pressure. It’s normal for it to go up and down throughout the day. However, problems can arise when your blood pressure stays too high for too long, causing your heart to work too hard and lose strength. The high force of blood flow can damage your blood vessels, making them weak, stiff or narrow. Over time, hypertension can harm important organs, including your heart, kidneys, brain and eyes.

## Risk Factors

- **Weight:** Carrying excess weight raises your risk.
- **Genetics:** A family history of high blood pressure can increase your risk.
- **Race:** African Americans are more likely to get hypertension as compared to Caucasian or Hispanic American adults.
- **Age:** About two-thirds of adults over 60 years old have hypertension.

Around one in three adults in the United States has high blood pressure, but many don’t realize it because of its lack of symptoms.

The good news is that you can prevent and treat high blood pressure to keep it from seriously damaging your health by getting an early diagnosis and making simple, healthy changes to your lifestyle.

