



Diabetes and High Blood Pressure

The link between diabetes and blood pressure:

High blood pressure is twice as likely to strike a person with diabetes than a person without diabetes. Left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to increased risk for heart disease and stroke. In fact, a person with diabetes and high blood pressure is four times as likely to develop heart disease than someone who does not have either of the conditions. About 73 percent of adults with diabetes have blood pressure greater than or equal to 130/80 mm Hg or use prescription medications for hypertension.

What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the artery walls. Each time the heart beats, it is pumping blood into these arteries - resulting in the highest blood pressure when the heart contracts and is pumping the blood. High blood pressure, or hypertension, directly increases the risk of coronary heart disease (heart attack) and stroke (brain attack). With high blood pressure, the arteries may have an increased resistance against the flow of blood, causing the heart to pump harder to circulate the blood.

Two numbers are used to measure blood pressure. The higher number, the systolic pressure, refers to the pressure inside the artery when the heart contracts and is pumping the blood through the body. The lower number, the diastolic pressure, refers to the pressure inside the artery when the heart is at rest and is filling with blood. Both the systolic and diastolic pressures are recorded as "mm Hg" (millimeters of mercury). This recording represents how high the mercury column is raised by the pressure of your blood.

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), high blood pressure for adults is defined as:

140 mm Hg or greater systolic pressure

and

90 mm Hg or greater diastolic pressure

In an update of NHLBI guidelines for hypertension in 2003, a new blood pressure category was added called prehypertension:

120 mm Hg – 139 mm Hg systolic pressure

and

80 mm Hg – 89 mm Hg diastolic pressure

The new NHLBI guidelines now define normal blood pressure as follows:

Less than 120 mm Hg systolic pressure

and

Less than 80 mm Hg diastolic pressure

What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

Often, persons with high blood pressure do not have noticeable symptoms. If the blood pressure is greatly elevated, an individual may experience the following. However, each individual may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

headache

dizziness

blurred vision

The symptoms of high blood pressure may resemble other medical conditions or problems. Always consult your physician for a diagnosis.

Preventing high blood pressure:

The American Diabetes Association recommends the following to help prevent the onset of high blood pressure:

Reduce salt intake.

Learn to relax.

Exercise regularly.

Maintain a reasonable weight.

Consume alcohol in moderation.

Stop smoking.

Monitor blood pressure.

Treatment for high blood pressure:

Specific treatment for high blood pressure will be determined by your physician based on:

your age, overall health, and medical history

extent of the disease

your tolerance for specific medications, procedures, or therapies

expectations for the course of the disease

your opinion or preference

Aside from taking preventive measures such as exercise, a balanced diet, and eliminating smoking, treatment also may include medications prescribed by your physician.