



Health Matters



Screening For High Blood Pressure

(NAPSA)—At a checkup, often, the first thing your health care provider does is check your blood pressure—and for good reason. High blood pressure is the leading cause of death in the United States, affecting nearly one in three adults—but you can control it. High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a serious condition that increases a person's risk for heart attack, stroke, and kidney and heart failure. Often, high blood pressure has no signs or symptoms.

Managing Your Risks

People at an increased risk of developing hypertension include those whose blood pressure is at the high end of the normal range, African Americans, and people who are overweight or obese. Also, people are more likely to develop high blood pressure as they get older.

Fortunately, there are many ways to manage high blood pressure and lower your risk of negative outcomes. Eating a healthy diet, losing weight, managing stress and getting more exercise are lifestyle changes that can make a big difference for someone with high blood pressure. In addition, a primary care physician may prescribe medication to lower high blood pressure.

If you are diagnosed with high blood pressure, you should talk to your doctor about treatment options and select a plan that works for you.



It's a healthy idea to have your blood pressure checked regularly.

Once Is Not Enough

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recently reviewed the science on screening for high blood pressure and recommended such tests in adults age 18 years and older.

Having a high blood pressure reading during a doctor's examination does not always mean a person actually has continuous high blood pressure. A blood pressure reading can be high for other reasons, such as:

- Stress, emotion, pain, physical activity, caffeine consumption or nicotine use
- Some people have high blood pressure only in a medical setting or around medical staff, also known as "white coat hypertension"
- An incorrect reading.

Unless it is clear that treatment should begin right away (because of very high blood pressure, signs of organ damage, or a diagnosis of high blood pressure caused by another medical condition), the Task Force recommends

that people who have a high blood pressure reading during their examination also take their blood pressure several times outside of the doctor's office to confirm the diagnosis before starting treatment.

There are two ways to confirm high blood pressure outside of the office. Your doctor may provide a wearable machine that automatically records your blood pressure every half hour. Or, he or she may suggest you use a home blood pressure monitor to take more readings. Your doctor will then look at these numbers to confirm your high blood pressure diagnosis and see if you need to begin treatment for high blood pressure.

Anyone age 40 years and older and those who are at an increased risk for high blood pressure should be screened every year. People ages 18 to 39 years and those who do not have other risk factors should be screened every three to five years.

Protecting Your Health

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. The Task Force makes evidence-based recommendations on primary care services.

Learn More

For more information on the Task Force and to read the full report on screening for high blood pressure, visit www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org.