

Discharge Instructions

[HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE -- ESTABLISHED]

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High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) is a chronic disease. The cause is unknown in most cases. It can usually be controlled with lifestyle changes and/or medicines. Symptoms of high blood pressure may include headache, dizziness, visual changes, chest pain and shortness of breath. Sometimes it causes no symptoms at all. However, even if there are no symptoms, untreated high blood pressure increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. It is a serious health risk and should not be ignored.



A normal blood pressure is 120/80 or less. The first (top) number is the "systolic" pressure. The second (bottom) number is the "diastolic" pressure. Hypertension exists when either the top number is 140 or higher, OR the bottom number is 90 or higher on repeated measurements.

HOME CARE:

All patients with high blood pressure should do the following to lower their pressure. If you are on medicines, then these methods may reduce or eliminate your need for medicines in the future.

- 1) Begin a weight loss program if you are overweight.
- 2) Reduce your salt intake.
 - Avoid high salt foods (olives, pickles, smoked meats, salted potato chips, etc.).
 - Do not add salt to your food at the table.
 - Use only small amounts of salt when cooking.
- 3) Begin an exercise program. Discuss with your doctor what type of exercise program would be best for you. It doesn't have to be difficult. Even brisk walking for 20 minutes three times a week is a good form of exercise.
- 4) Avoid medicines which contain heart stimulants. This includes many cold and sinus decongestant pills and sprays as well as diet pills. Check the warnings about hypertension on the label. Stimulants such as amphetamine or cocaine could be lethal for someone with hypertension. Never take these.
- 5) Limit your caffeine intake or switch to caffeine-free products.
- 6) Stop smoking. If you are a long-time smoker, this can be hard. Enroll in a stop-smoking program to improve your chance of success.
- 7) Learning how to handle stress better is an important part of any program to lower blood pressure. Learn about relaxation methods such as meditation, yoga or biofeedback.
- 8) If medicines were prescribed, take them exactly as directed. Missing doses may cause your blood pressure get out of control.
- 9) Consider buying an automatic blood pressure machine (available at most pharmacies). Use this to monitor your blood pressure at home and report the results to your doctor.

FOLLOW UP: Regular visits to your own physician for blood pressure checks and medicine adjustment is an important part of your care. Make a follow-up appointment as directed by our staff.

RETURN PROMPTLY or contact your doctor if any of the following occur:

- Chest pain or shortness of breath
- Severe headache
- Throbbing or rushing sound in the ears
- Nosebleed
- Sudden severe abdominal pain
- Extreme drowsiness, confusion or fainting
- Dizziness or vertigo (dizziness with spinning sensation)
- Weakness of an arm or leg or one side of the face
- Difficulty with speech or vision