



High Blood Pressure

It's called the silent killer. This heartless murderer isn't lurking outside your door. But it may be closer than you think, and could attack you without warning. What is it? High blood pressure. Because it causes no symptoms, it can quietly increase your risk for some pretty deadly conditions, such as heart disease, heart attack, stroke, and kidney failure.

Almost one out of three Americans has high blood pressure—one out of two, for those over age 60. Also called hypertension, high blood pressure is more common in African Americans; people who are obese, heavy drinkers, or taking birth control pills; or those who have diabetes, gout, or kidney disease. It may also run in families.

The only way to know whether or not you have high blood pressure is to have it measured. Perhaps you've gotten yours checked more than once. But did you really understand what it was all about?

Blood pressure is actually two measurements. The first (systolic pressure) is a measure of the force against artery walls when your heart beats. The second (diastolic pressure) is a measure of the force between beats, when your heart is relaxed and filling with blood.

A measurement of 120 over 80 or lower is normal. Usually, the lower the better, but sometimes a very low reading is cause for concern. High blood pressure is equal to or greater than 140 over 90.

Although nobody knows the cause of high blood pressure, there's a lot you can do to keep this killer at bay. If you have high blood pressure, your doctor may want you to try lifestyle changes first. Exercise regularly, try relaxation techniques, and eat a healthy diet. This might include limiting sodium to less than 2,400 mg and having no more than one or two alcoholic drinks a day. If you smoke, stop. If you're overweight, know that even a 10-pound loss can make a difference.

If effective, lifestyle changes may mean you can avoid the big defensive guns—medications—or you may be able to reduce the amount you need. And, remember that making lifestyle changes might help prevent high blood pressure in the first place.

If you need medication to control your high blood pressure, you'll take it for the rest of your life. That may take some getting used to. But know that a wide range of medications are available—diuretics, beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors, alpha blockers, calcium channel blockers—which work in a variety of ways. I can help explain their differences. If you're troubled by side effects, tell your doctor, who can help you find another option.

Be sure to get your blood pressure checked at least every two years—more often if it's high. To make this easier, our store carries blood pressure monitors that you can purchase. I'd be glad to show you the right way to use them. There's no reason why we can't take steps together to create a manageable lifestyle.



If you have any questions please feel free to contact me @ 873-3244 or mcglynnrx@tds.net

Thanks, Dan McGlynn