Hypertension
(High Blood Pressure)

Most people with high blood pressure (*hypertension*) have no symptoms. High blood pressure can be a dangerous problem. Hypertension is dangerous because you can have it and not know it. High blood pressure may mean that the heart needs to work harder to pump blood.

Your blood pressure is measured with 2 numbers. The first number is when your heart flexes (*contracts*), and the second number is when your heart relaxes. The higher the numbers are, the more you are at risk for problems.

Write down your blood pressure today. The best blood pressure for adults is 120/80 (mmHg) or lower. It is likely that your blood pressure was recorded at least 2 times today. It is important for you to give these numbers to your doctor. If you do not have a doctor, try to get follow-up care at a hospital or community clinic. You may need to start high blood pressure medicine. You may also need to adjust your medicines as told by your doctor. Even mild high blood pressure increases long-term health risks.

One high reading does not mean you have hypertension.

- Your blood pressure should be taken when you are relaxed. It is also important to sit for about 10 minutes before being tested.
- Things that can increase your blood pressure are:
  - Injury.
  - Illness.
  - Stress.
  - Caffeine.
  - Some medicines (like decongestants).
- High blood pressure does not usually need emergency treatment.

HOME CARE

- Lifestyle and medicine changes may be needed, including:
  - Weight loss.
  - Exercise.
- Limit the use of salt.
- Stop smoking.
- If using decongestants or birth control pills, talk to your doctor. These medicines might make blood pressure higher.
- **Do not** use street drugs.
- Females should not drink more than 1 alcoholic drink per day. Males should not drink more than 2 alcoholic drinks per day.
- Take your blood pressure medicine. You will need to take it every day. If you do not get treated, there are risks, including:
  - Heart disease.
  - Stroke.
  - Kidney failure.
- See your doctor as told.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- You get a very bad headache.
- You get blurred or changing vision.

- You feel confused.
- You feel weak, numb, or faint.
- You get chest or belly (*abdominal*) pain.
- You throw up (*vomit*).
- You cannot breathe very well.

If you have a blood pressure reading with a top number of 180 or higher, you need to see your doctor right away. This is especially true if you are having any of the problems listed above.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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