



Information for Patients & Caregivers

What you need to know about High
Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

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⊕ WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure (BP) is the force your blood produces against the walls of your arteries as your heart pumps blood through your body. It is recorded as two numbers, for example 120/80. The upper number (systolic) is the pressure in the arteries as the heart contracts. The lower number (diastolic) is the pressure in the arteries when the heart rests between each heartbeat.

Your BP naturally fluctuates throughout the day and night, and it is normal for it to go up while you are moving about.

⊕ WHAT IS HYPERTENSION?

Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) is when your blood pressure is consistently higher than normal, even at rest, with a reading that is 140/90 mmHg or above.

This means that your heart has to work harder to pump blood around your body.

If you have hypertension, we advise that you do not ignore it, because uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to many chronic illnesses, the most common being heart diseases. It can also damage arteries and organs such as the kidneys, brain, and eyes.

Hypertension rarely has any noticeable symptoms. Hence, it's very important to get your BP checked regularly. The following can be symptoms of hypertension:

- Blurred vision.
- Nosebleeds.
- Breathlessness.
- Chest pain.
- Dizziness.
- Headaches.

Many people with high BP do not know they have it and usually feel fine. But even if you feel fine, you should still have your BP checked regularly. Hy

⊕ WHAT CAUSES HYPERTENSION?

In most cases, the cause of hypertension is unknown. This is called **Essential Hypertension**. The common risk factors to developing this type of hypertension include:

- **Increasing age** (age ≥ 55 years in men and ≥ 65 years in women).
- **Obesity.**
- **Low physical activity.**
- **Unhealthy** diets such as high salt intake.
- **Positive family history.**
- **Tobacco smoking.**
- **Excess alcohol consumption.**
- **Psychosocial stress.**

In some cases, the high blood pressure is caused by other health problems. This is called **Secondary Hypertension**.

Your doctor would tell you more about this type of hypertension.

⊕ WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

It is important that you see your doctor for regular BP check if:

- You experience any of the following symptoms:
 - Persistent headaches.
 - Heart palpitations.
 - Persistent or recurrent chest pain or dizziness.
 - Ringing in ears.
 - Any changes after starting your medicines.
- You have one or more of the above risk factors.
- You have Diabetes.

See your doctor immediately if you experience:

- Crushing chest pain, feel sweaty and look pale.
- Weakness or numbness.
- Abnormal changes in your speech.

⊕ WHAT YOUR DOCTOR WILL DO

Your doctor will ask you questions about your lifestyle, the above risk

factors and symptoms of organ damage. Your doctor will examine your BP and other parts of your body. A diagnosis of hypertension will be made, if you have several blood pressure readings that are high, taken on different occasions, in a relaxed state.

Some people can become anxious in the clinics. This can cause their BP to rise. This is called **White coat hypertension**. In this case, your doctor may recommend that you monitor your BP at home, when you are relaxed. Your doctor will order some routine tests:

- **Urine test** to check for protein or blood in your urine.
- **Blood test** to check your cholesterol and sugar levels.
- A heart tracing, known as **electrocardiogram (ECG)**.

Your doctor will discuss the treatment options with you including general advice on lifestyle choice. In some cases, you may be referred to a specialist for further treatment.



⊕ TREATMENTS

Treatment options for lowering BP include:

- **Lifestyle Advice** where required, such as
 - Weight loss.
 - Stop smoking.
 - Regular physical exercise.
 - Eating healthy diets.
 - Reducing salt and caffeine intake.
 - Reducing alcohol intake.
- **Anti-hypertensive medications** which are prescribed as tablets.

⊕ MEDICINES TO TREAT HYPERTENSION

Different types of medicines are available for treating high blood pressure.

- **ACE inhibitors.**
- **Angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs).**
- **Calcium-channel blockers.**
- **Diuretics.**
- **Alpha-blockers.**
- **Beta-blockers.**

They all work in different ways. Most people need to take more than one type of medicine to control their blood pressure.

Your doctor will advise on which of the above classes of medications are best for you.

⊕ DIETARY APPROACH TO STOP HYPERTENSION

DASH diet is a lifelong approach to healthy eating that is designed to help treat or prevent hypertension.

The DASH diet recommends that you eat more vegetables, fruit and low-fat dairy foods, and moderate amounts of whole grains, fish, poultry, and nuts.

It encourages you to reduce the salt in your diet and eat a variety of foods rich in nutrients such as potassium, calcium and magnesium that helps to lower blood pressure.



⊕ FOLLOW-UP

It is important that you have regular BP checks and follow-up appointments to ensure that your tablets are at an optimal dose for you.

Continue to take your medicines, even when your BP is well controlled, unless your doctor advises you to stop.

Ensure you take your medicine at the same time each day.

Ask your doctor about the side effects of the medicines prescribed to you and whether there are any activities you need to avoid.

IMPORTANT TIP:
Keep a diary of your BP readings so that you can monitor your progress.

⊕ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on diagnosis and management of hypertension can be found in the National Clinical Guideline published by The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) Qatar.

The Guideline is available for public on MOPH website: www.moph.gov.qa.



Be careful with you diet. Choose food that contains less than 140mg sodium per serving. You can find how much sodium is in the food by reading the food label.