

## Blood Pressure/Hypertension

### What does the blood pressure reading mean?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. Arteries are blood vessels (thick, muscular tubes) that carry oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the rest of the body.

Blood pressure (BP) has two measurements:

- ◆ top number (systolic) = pressure on arteries when the heart is pumping
- ◆ bottom number (diastolic) = pressure on arteries when the heart is resting

### Why worry about high blood pressure ?

Untreated hypertension (htn) can lead to heart attacks, strokes, brain/aortic aneurysms, peripheral vascular disease, and heart or kidney failure. Nearly 1 in 3 people >20yo have htn, men and women being equal. Prevalence increases with age.

### RISK FACTORS

- ◆ Stress/anxiety
- ◆ Age; family history
- ◆ Smoking
- ◆ Obesity/sedentary lifestyle
- ◆ Diabetes mellitus

- ◆ Oral contraceptives
- ◆ Alcohol abuse
- ◆ Race (more common in African-Americans)
- ◆ Sleep apnea
- ◆ Unhealthy diet
- ◆ Elevated uric acid
- ◆ Drugs/supplements: black licorice, NSAID's (e.g. ibuprofen), decongestants (e.g. Sudafed®), diet pills, ADD/amphetamines, SSRI/SNRI (anxiety/depression meds), erythropoietin, HIV meds, oral/injectable steroids, caffeine, cocaine, ecstasy

### What if my blood pressure is too high?

Common causes of a temporary elevation in one's BP include fever, illness, pain, medications, stress, caffeine, alcohol, and lack of sleep. SHC medical professionals can assess your risk factors and discuss lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, smoking, weight, etc.) A referral can be made to the SHC dietitian. For some, limiting salt to 2g/day and increasing potassium and calcium in the diet can be helpful. Medicine is prescribed if the diagnosis of htn has been proven over several visits and if lifestyle changes are not enough to maintain a healthy BP.

### Classifying Blood Pressure

If Your Blood Pressure Values Are:		Reading Result:	
<b>Systolic</b>		<b>Diastolic</b>	
Less than 120	and	Less than 80	Normal blood pressure
120—139	or	80-89	Borderline/Prehypertension
140—159	or	90-99	Stage 1 hypertension
≥ 160	or	≥ 100	Stage 2 hypertension

Source: MKSAP 17: Nephrology

Helpful information can be found at the American Heart Association website @ [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/High-Blood-Pressure-or-Hypertension\\_UCM\\_002020\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/High-Blood-Pressure-or-Hypertension_UCM_002020_SubHomePage.jsp)