

Blood pressure is pressure in the arteries as the heart pumps blood around the body.

### What to look for

- There are generally no symptoms for high blood pressure as the early stages of hypertension may take a few years to develop
- A higher than normal blood pressure. Normal for young and middle aged adults is a pressure of 120/80. A pressure of 140/90 is definitely something to be concerned about. If the pressure is 160/95 it requires treatment.
- Blackouts, a minor stroke are indications that your blood pressure is too high and can be fatal if it is not treated.
- swollen ankles
- shortness of breath
- headaches, dizziness and nose bleeds

### Traditional Treatment

Your doctor will give you a thorough examination to check if your blood pressure is the result of another disease such as Cushing's disease or kidney problems however, usually there is no immediate cause for the high blood pressure.

It is advisable that if over weight, the patient try to stay within your recommended weight level. Also try to avoid salt in your diet and reduce stress levels in your lifestyle. Exercise is also recommended.

If you have a stressful job, some doctors will advise you to give it up and take some time off to rest completely.

These lifestyle changes quite often bring the blood pressure down considerably.

A doctor will prescribe medication for you if the above approaches and lifestyle changes still do not bring the blood pressure down. Some of these drugs will have side effects which can be serious. Your doctor will know which drugs should be given to you and will explain all the side effects to you. The doctor will keep a close check on the patient to take the blood pressure and watch for possible side effects.

### Alternative/Natural Treatments

**Body/Mind Work** - Yoga, Meditation and other relaxation techniques can help relax the patient and lower the stress levels.

**Herbal Remedies** - Hawthorn, dandelion and linden, garlic and ginger are helpful for blood pressure problems.

### Dietary Considerations

- Eat less salt - best of all try to avoid it altogether (use herbs, garlic and ginger instead)
- Avoid heavily salted food (such as packaged food)
- Try to eat more dairy products - low fat one only. You may be low on calcium.
- Avoid too much alcohol as this can raise blood pressure.
- Give up smoking as this can harden the arteries and cause coronary heart disease.

### When to seek further professional advice

- if your blood pressure is over the recommended level
- if you have any of the symptoms listed above
- if you are on medication for high blood pressure and are suffering any side effect - **see your doctor immediately.**