

# FACTS ABOUT HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

- ♥ **HYPERTENSION** means high blood pressure. Feeling "hyper" or "tense" is not the same as having hypertension.
- ♥ Hypertension increases the risk for heart attack or heart failure, stroke, kidney failure and damage to vision or blindness. (Heart disease is the number one killer in Jefferson County and the nation; stroke is number three.)
- ♥ High blood pressure is one of six major controllable risk factors for cardiovascular disease. (Smoking, high blood cholesterol, obesity, diabetes and insufficient exercise are the others.) Uncontrollable risk factors include heredity, sex, age and race. While one-fourth of all Americans have high blood pressure, one-third of African Americans are hypertensive.)
- ♥ There is no known cause for ninety percent of high blood pressure cases.
- ♥ Hypertension is largely "asymptomatic" -- that means there are usually no symptoms. In other words, you cannot tell your blood pressure is high by the way you feel.
- ♥ Blood pressure is constantly changing (fluctuating) according to your body's needs at the moment.
- ♥ Normal blood pressure for ages 18 and older is less than 120/80. Pre-hypertension is 120-139 over 80-89. High blood pressure is defined as 140/90 or higher. For people with diabetes, a healthy blood pressure is less than 130/80 (less than 120/75 if they have kidney problems). The upper number, the "systolic" pressure, is the pressure of the blood against the arteries each time the heart beats. The lower number, the "diastolic" pressure, is the pressure of the blood against the arteries between heartbeats.
- ♥ A proper diet may help lower blood pressure. That includes eating less salt and salty foods; limiting fat, especially saturated and hydrogenated fats; eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods; and drinking alcoholic beverages in moderation.
- ♥ Keeping weight under control and getting 30-60 minutes of moderately intense physical activity most days can help lower blood pressure and help prevent high blood pressure.
- ♥ If medication is prescribed by your doctor, always take it as directed. If you experience side-effects, let your doctor know.
- ♥ Hypertension **cannot** be cured! However, it can be controlled. Your life depends on it!



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