

## Causes of Hypertension

Though the exact causes of hypertension are usually unknown, there are several factors that have been highly associated with the condition. These include:

Unhealthy lifestyle

Obesity and non management of your body mass

Eating unhealthy foods or meals

Advancing age

Non management of tension or stress levels

Lipids — cholesterol, fatty acids and derivatives

Lack of physical activity — exercise deficiency

Tobacco use including second hand smoke

Heredity—generational trait

Intake of alcohol in excess

Diabetic

Pregnancy

## Signs and Symptoms

There is no guarantee that a person with hypertension will present any symptoms of the condition. Most people actually do not know that they have high blood pressure, and this ignorance can last for years. For this reason, it is advisable to undergo periodic blood pressure screenings even when no symptoms are present.

However, a person who has been having a raised blood pressure for some time may have a blurred vision, a very bad headache, chest pain, shortness of breath, confusion, sleepiness and unconsciousness.

## Prevention and Control

At least 1 in 3 adults globally has a raised blood pressure. Proportions increase with age, 1 in 10 in their 20s and 30s, 5 in 10 people in their 50s and so forth. In 2005, Zimbabwe recorded 27 in 100 people had high blood pressure. There is hope.

You can prevent and lower blood pressure and reduce your risk of heart disease by adopting the following tips. This also helps control the bad effects high blood pressure can have on other organs as well.

1. Lose extra weight and watch your waistline
2. Exercise regularly
3. Eat a healthy low salt diet
4. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink
5. Avoid tobacco products and secondhand smoke
6. Cut back on caffeine
7. Reduce your stress levels
8. Monitor your blood pressure
9. Make regular doctor's appointments
10. Get support from family and friends

There are many different types of blood pressure medications. Depending on your blood pressure readings, other risk factors and the presence of other medical conditions, you will need to work with your doctor to find the best treatment .

**Prevent future complications, control your high blood pressure by changing your lifestyle, taking medications and working with your health care team**

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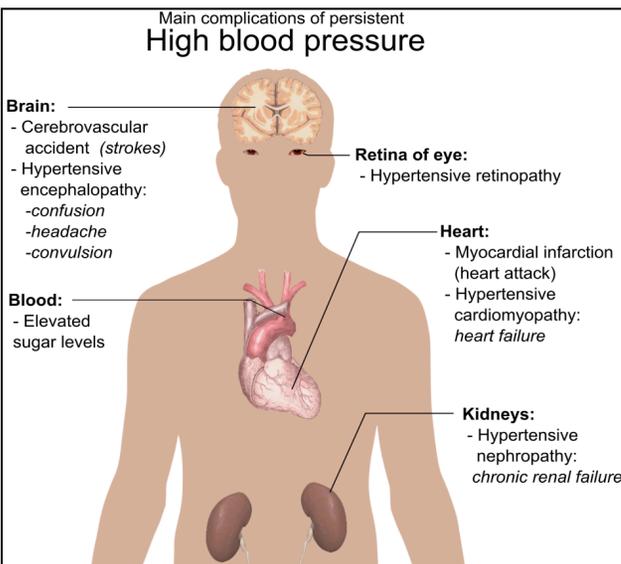
**Causes, Signs & Symptoms, Prevention , Control & Complications of**

# HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

## Understanding High Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the amount of force exerted against the walls of the arteries as blood flows through them - if a person has high or raised blood pressure, also known as Hypertension, it means that the walls of the arteries are receiving too much pressure repeatedly - the pressure needs to be chronically elevated for a diagnosis of hypertension to be confirmed. In medicine *chronic* means for a sustained period; persistent. Over time, the effects of high blood pressure can include a Heart attack, Kidney failure, Congestive heart failure, Eye damage with loss of vision, Peripheral arterial disease, including bulges or out-pouchings of the aorta, a stroke or "mini stroke" -- also known as a "TIA" (transient ischemic attack).

The body structures most vulnerable to high blood pressure include the blood vessels, heart, brain, eyes and kidneys. Most people with high blood pressure do not have any high blood pressure symptoms, since the effects are occurring inside the body.



## High Blood Pressure's Effects on Blood Vessels

The small blood vessels in the vital organs are commonly affected by high blood pressure over time. High blood pressure causes blood vessels to become scarred, hardened, and less elastic -- which means they are more likely to get blocked or rupture. This may happen naturally as you get older (whether or not your blood pressure is too high), but high blood pressure can speed up this process.

Another one of high blood pressure's effects on your blood vessels is that it may play a role in the development of atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is the process of the artery walls becoming thicker (also known as narrowing or "hardening") due to a build-up of lipids, — fat and cholesterol. High blood pressure adds strain to the blood vessel walls, putting them at higher risk for developing atherosclerosis than they would be otherwise.

## Effects on the Heart

If the inside of your blood vessels get smaller and harder -- and the pressure inside them increases -- your heart has to pump harder to get blood through them. Your heart is a muscle, and just like other muscles, working this hard makes your heart get bigger and stretched out, and some of the blood that is supposed to pump through your body remains inside the heart instead. Eventually, the heart begins to weaken because it simply cannot continue to pump so hard against the pressure in your vessels. When the heart can no longer pump all the blood out of its chambers, a person has what's known as congestive heart failure. This is a serious condition. Fluid backing up into the lungs and chest cavity -- leading to extreme shortness of breath -- can be a symptom of congestive heart failure.

## Effects on the Brain

High blood pressure can also damage the brain. Blood vessels in the brain can rupture or get blocked, just like blood vessels elsewhere in the body. The difference is that if a blood vessel ruptures in the brain, the bleeding can cause serious problems, or even death. This bleeding is called a haemorrhage. If a blood vessel in the brain gets blocked, the brain tissues will be deprived of the nutrients and oxygen they usually get from the blood. This is known as a stroke. High blood pressure is a major cause of both strokes and bleeding in the brain. It can also affect normal brain function as a person ages.

## Effects on the Kidneys

The kidneys are also important organs that can be damaged by high blood pressure. If the arteries that supply blood to the kidneys are damaged, the kidneys' tissues will not get the blood they need and the kidneys themselves can gradually lose their ability to function.

## Effects on the Eyes

High blood pressure can also cause changes in the retinas of your eyes. The retina is where the eye receives visual images. High blood pressure also puts the blood vessels in the eyes at risk for getting more narrow, rupturing and bleeding. These effects result in impaired vision and, over time, may lead to blindness.

People with untreated high blood pressure are three times more likely to have heart disease, six times more likely to develop congestive heart failure and seven times more likely to have a stroke.