

High blood pressure



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HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE The definition of High blood pressure is a measurement of the force applied against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps blood through the body. The pressure is determined by the force and amount of blood pumped and the size and flexibility of the arteries. The blood pressure is continually changing depending on activity, temperature, diet, emotional state, posture, physical state, and drugs. The blood pressure is usually taken while the person is seated with the arm resting on a table and slightly bent so that the arm is at the same level as the heart. Blood pressure readings are usually given as two numbers: 110 over 70. The first number is called the systolic blood pressure reading and represents the maximum pressure exerted when the heart contracts. The second number is called the diastolic blood pressure reading and it represents the pressure in the arteries when the heart is at rest. The test can be done at any time. It is usually done after resting at least 5 minutes. The only thing you can feel during the test is the pressure of the cuff on the arm. There is no risk to taking the test. Most people cannot sense if their blood pressure is high because there are usually no symptoms. High blood pressure increases the risk of heart failure, heart attack, stroke, and kidney failure. For people who have high blood pressure, taking the test is a way of monitoring the effectiveness of medications and dietary modifications on the blood pressure. Generally, the systolic pressure is approximately 120 and the diastolic pressure is approximately 70 to 80. Abnormal results are mild hypertension where diastolic pressure is 90 to 104. Significant hypertension is when systolic pressure is above 200 or diastolic pressure is above 100. Hypotension is when blood pressure is below normal. Consult the health care provider if the measurements are consistently high or low or if symptoms are

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present at the time as the high or low reading. Repeated measurements are important for screening or monitoring. A single high measurement does not necessarily mean hypertension. A single normal measurement does not necessarily mean that high blood pressure is not present.