

What Does “High Blood Pressure” mean?

What does it mean to have a high blood pressure reading?

Having a raised blood pressure reading on one test does not necessarily mean you have high blood pressure or “hypertension”. Hypertension should not be diagnosed until there have been consistently high measurements on several different occasions.

Your blood pressure normally fluctuates throughout the course of the day - it goes up during exercise and is lower at rest and particularly lower during sleep. Your body continually adjusts your blood pressure to deliver oxygen and nutrients to the tissues and organs that most need them — your muscles during a jog or your digestive system at mealtime, for example. Your blood pressure also varies according to the time of day. It’s usually highest in the morning and lowest at night. Feeling anxious or stressed can also raise your blood pressure.

Because blood pressure varies so much, it is important to have it checked several times on different days before deciding the blood pressure is “high.”

Why is high blood pressure so important?

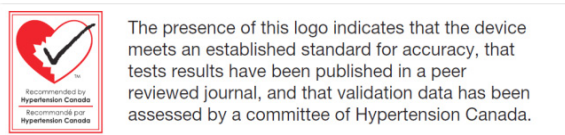
Although high blood pressure usually causes no symptoms at all, if blood pressure is too high for too long, it can damage blood vessels over time and increase the risk of serious health problems such as a stroke or heart attack. The risk associated with high blood pressure increases with age and is further increased in the presence of other risk factors such as smoking, high cholesterol and diabetes.

You may be given a blood pressure kit to take home, or be asked to wear a 24-hour monitor, so your blood pressure level can be measured throughout the day. This will confirm whether or not your blood pressure is frequently high. You may also have blood and urine tests to check for conditions that are known to cause an increase in blood pressure, such as kidney disease.

What else do I need to know?

If you plan to check your blood pressure at home, read below and see photo:

- ✓ Rest quietly for 5 minutes before taking any readings.
- ✓ Apply the blood pressure cuff to your bare arm & position as directed.
- ✓ Do **Not** smoke or drink caffeine 30 minutes beforehand.
- ✓ Do not talk while taking the readings.
- ✓ Measure BP in the morning and in the afternoon/evening for 7 days before your appointment. Complete two readings at a time.
- ✓ Write down the BP readings in a log, indicate the dates & times taken.



The presence of this logo indicates that the device meets an established standard for accuracy, that tests results have been published in a peer reviewed journal, and that validation data has been assessed by a committee of Hypertension Canada.

Choosing Home Blood Pressure Monitors

Before you purchase a home blood pressure monitor, look for this logo. Check the list of monitors recommended by Hypertension Canada at: <http://www.hypertension.ca/en/hypertension/what-do-i-need-to-know/how-to-measure-my-blood-pressure> (click the green button)

More Information available at Hypertension Canada Resources for Patients:

- How to Measure My Blood Pressure www.hypertension.ca (click “Public” tab, select “What do I need to know?”)
- More Info available at: <http://guidelines.hypertension.ca/patient-resources/>

Sources: 1) National Health Service (NHS). High Blood Pressure Diagnosis 2014. [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Blood-pressure-\(high\)/Pages/Diagnosis.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Blood-pressure-(high)/Pages/Diagnosis.aspx); **2)** Harvard Medical School Patient Education Center. Blood Pressure Basics 2016 <http://www.patienteducationcenter.org/articles/blood-pressure-basics/>; **3)** Family Doctor. New Zealand. <http://www.familydoctor.co.nz/categories/high-blood-pressure/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/>; **4)** PubMed Health. High Blood Pressure: Overview 2015. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0072423/>

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