

FACTS ABOUT HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND HIGH CHOLESTEROL

BY THE NUMBERS

- African Americans have the highest rate of high blood pressure of all groups, and tend to develop it at a younger age than other groups.
- Nearly 45 percent of African-American men have borderline to high cholesterol.
- Among African-American women age 20 and older, 44.3 percent have high blood pressure.
- Your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers have a lot to do with your chances of having a heart attack or a stroke.
- Heart attacks and strokes are leading causes of death among African-American men and women.

THE SILENT KILLERS

High blood pressure and high cholesterol are silent – they typically don't cause symptoms. That means you can have high blood pressure and high cholesterol even if you feel fine. Know your risk factors. If you have one or more and you aren't already being treated, make an appointment with your doctor to CHECK IT. If someone in your family has risk factors, encourage him or her to see a doctor, too.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

High blood pressure is a condition where the force of the blood against your artery walls is high enough that it may cause serious health problems. For yourself and your loved ones, be safe: visit your doctor to find out your blood pressure numbers – even if you feel fine.

High blood pressure risk factors include:

- Excessive weight
- A family history of high blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Inactivity
- High dietary salt and fat
- Low intake of potassium (found in fruits and vegetables)
- Smoking
- Increased age

Two numbers make up a blood pressure measurement, for example 149/96 (149 over 96). A simple blood pressure check will tell you whether you have normal blood pressure or high blood pressure.

Normal Blood Pressure*	High Blood Pressure*
Less than 120 over less than 80; <120/80 mm Hg	140 or higher over 90 or higher; >140/90 mm Hg

High blood pressure is a risk factor for:

- Stroke
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Blindness
- Dementia
- Erectile dysfunction

*Normal and high blood pressure can vary based on overall health and other factors. Ask your doctor about the results of your blood pressure test and what your goal levels should be.

HIGH CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance in your blood. Too much cholesterol can build up in the walls of your arteries and cause damage over time; arteries narrow and blood flow to the heart slows down or becomes blocked. Eventually, this causes heart disease and can lead to a heart attack.

High cholesterol risk factors include:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure (140/90 mm Hg or higher or on blood pressure medication)
- Low HDL cholesterol (less than 40 mg/dL)
- Family history of early heart disease (heart disease in father or brother before age 55; heart disease in mother or sister before age 65)

If total cholesterol is more than 200 (mg/dL), treatment and/or lifestyle modification are needed.**

A simple blood test will give your doctor the information he or she needs to tell if you have high cholesterol. This kind of test is called a lipid profile, and it measures:

- Total cholesterol (LDL cholesterol + HDL cholesterol)
- LDL (bad) cholesterol – the main source of cholesterol buildup and blockage in the arteries
- HDL (good) cholesterol – helps keep cholesterol from building up in the arteries
- Triglycerides – another form of fat in your blood that raises your risk of heart disease

High cholesterol is a risk factor for:

- Heart disease
- Metabolic syndrome (a condition that increases your chance of getting Type 2 diabetes)
- Hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis)

What if You Have One or More of these Conditions?

If you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or both, partner with your doctor to improve your numbers. If your numbers are normal, adopting or maintaining a healthy lifestyle can help you prevent developing them in the future. Either way, ask your family for their support and encourage them to take control of their own heart health, especially if you find that a family history of heart disease is present in your family.

You should also:

- Eat healthy: five or more servings of fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables; less salt, sweets and fat; smaller portions.
- Be active: 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.
- Don't smoke: check out successful programs to kick the habit for good; if you don't smoke, don't start.
- Drink less or no alcohol: no more than two drinks per day for men and no more than one drink per day for women.

**This is a general guideline, but it may vary based on overall health and other factors. Ask your doctor about the results of your cholesterol test and what your goal levels should be.

