

Hypertension—High Blood Pressure

As medical professionals who see our patients more often than their physician, we offer blood pressure screening to identify this silent condition.

Blood pressure is the force exerted on the walls of your arteries when the heart beats (systolic pressure) and when the heart is at rest (diastolic pressure). A sustained blood pressure reading greater than 140/90 is called hypertension, or high blood pressure. It is a silent condition and there is no feeling of higher pressure. When the pressure gets greater than 160/100 you need to see your physician immediately, and your dental appointment may be postponed.

Chronic high blood pressure increases the risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. It is a major risk factor for heart failure and kidney failure. When hypertension is combined with conditions such as obesity, high blood cholesterol, smoking, or diabetes, your risk of heart attack or stroke is further increased.

You should discuss the treatment of hypertension with your doctor. In addition to taking blood pressure medications, you can reduce your blood pressure by reducing your sodium intake (salt), losing weight, getting regular physical exercise, and limiting your alcohol intake. The DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) is high in fruits, potassium-rich vegetables, low fat dairy foods, whole grains, nuts, poultry and fish.

If you have questions about your blood pressure, please discuss them with your physician. We would be happy to provide a history of your previous blood pressure readings.

American Heart Association recommended blood pressure levels

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic (mm Hg)		Diastolic (mm Hg)
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80
Prehypertension	120-139	or	80-89
High			
Stage 1	140-159	or	90-99
Stage 2	160 or higher	or	100 or higher