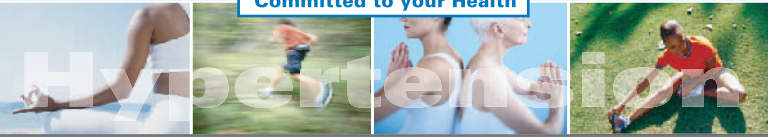




**Lindo's**  
PHARMACY

Committed to your Health



# ➔ Hypertension

## ■ What is blood pressure?

The term 'blood pressure' refers to the pressure exerted on the walls of large blood vessels by the blood as it circulates through the body. When the heart muscle contracts to push the blood into the body, the pressure is at its greatest point, known as 'systolic' pressure. When the heart relaxes before the next contraction the pressure reaches its lowest point, known as 'diastolic' pressure. Both values are measured when you have your pressure checked

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## ■ How is blood pressure measured?

It is most commonly measured with a device, which consists of a gauge, a rubber-lined cuff, a stethoscope and a small rubber hand-pump. This cuff is placed on the upper arm, at the level of the heart, and the pump is used to inflate it so that blood circulation is cut-off for a few moments. As the cuff deflates and blood circulation is slowly restored, a sound similar to heart-beat is picked up by the stethoscope. This 'upper' value is the systolic pressure. When the sounds disappear, this value corresponds to diastolic blood pressure. It is very important that you be as relaxed as possible, with the arm supported by an arm-rest. There are also many brands of automatic blood pressure monitors around, but they are not as accurate.

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## ■ What is hypertension?

If your blood pressure reading is repeatedly higher than 160/90 you most likely will be diagnosed as having 'hypertension'. If the value is higher than 140/90, you may be diagnosed as 'borderline hypertensive', though these values may change as research continues. Hypertension does not produce any immediate symptoms and is sometimes hard to treat because people don't feel sick, until some permanent damage is done.

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## ■ Why treat hypertension?

Hypertension has to be treated because the higher the pressure, the higher the risk of developing other health problems. When the blood vessels are exposed to high blood pressure for long periods of time, they can get damaged, roughened and become stiff and hard. If the artery gets too narrow the blood circulation to that body area is reduced and there is an increased tendency to develop blood clots. Depending on where these blood clots occur, they could cause heart attacks and strokes. In addition, people who have other risk factors, such as diabetes are at an even higher risk of these conditions as well as poor circulation, kidney and eye problems. To help reduce the risk it is also important to eliminate smoking and lower blood cholesterol levels. Lowering blood pressure can save many lives.

## ■ What causes hypertension?

In most people there is no specific cause. A small percentage of people have an underlying problem, such as kidney disease. There are some known risk factors, however. Heredity is one factor, increasing age is another. Racial background is also important, as black people in the western world tend to have higher prevalence of hypertension than white people. The most important factor, actually, is diet and lifestyle. It has been shown that the western society, as a whole, is more prone to hypertension than poorer, less developed countries.

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## ■ How can one reduce blood pressure?

The first and easiest step in lowering blood pressure is lowering dietary salt intake. The second, very effective, step is losing weight, especially by reducing animal fat consumption and eating more fruits and vegetables. In addition, reducing alcohol consumption and exercising regularly will further improve one's chances of successfully lowering blood pressure.

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## ■ What drugs are used to control hypertension?

If the above mentioned steps alone are not fully effective in lowering blood pressure, it may be necessary to add medication. There are many antihypertensive drugs on the market. Your physician will determine the best medication for you based on your blood pressure and other risk factors. A large portion of people may need two or more different drugs to effectively control their pressure. There are many different classes of anti-hypertensive medications used. Diuretics, or 'water pills' (such as hydrochlorothiazide or HCTZ and furosemide), help the body get rid of salt and excess water. Beta-blockers (such as atenolol and propranolol) help by slowing down the heart and decreasing the force of its contractions. Alpha-blockers (like doxazosin) help relax the blood vessels. Calcium channel blockers (like nifedipine) relax the vessels by blocking the action of calcium in the smooth muscle of smaller arteries. Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors (such as enalapril) prevent the activation of a potent vessel constricting hormone. Another group of drugs, called 'angiotensin receptor antagonists' (losartan is a drug in this class), block the effects of the same hormone. These drugs are remarkably safe to take. There are also many combination drugs on the market as well, making daily pill taking a little more convenient.

**It is important to remember that if you are taking any medication for hypertension, you should speak with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any over the counter (OTC) medication.**

**Most importantly, LIVE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE, learn more about different ways to lower your blood pressure. PARTICIPATE! Your life is worth it!**

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