



High blood pressure causes

Main factors that contribute to high blood pressure

Smoking and high blood pressure

How to know if I have high blood pressure?

Very high blood pressure readings

References

Main factors that contribute to high blood pressure



The development of high blood pressure (BP) can be attributed to a combination of several factors as described below.¹

Social determinants and drivers



Unhealthy environment due to rapid unplanned urbanization encourages unhealthy lifestyles



Stiffening of blood vessels due to ageing



Income, education and housing are social determinants of health due to their effect on behavioural risk factors.

Behavioural risk factors



Unhealthy diet ie, consumption of food containing too much salt (sodium) and fat, and not eating enough fruits and vegetables



Tobacco use



Physical inactivity and lack of exercise



Harmful use of alcohol



Poor stress management

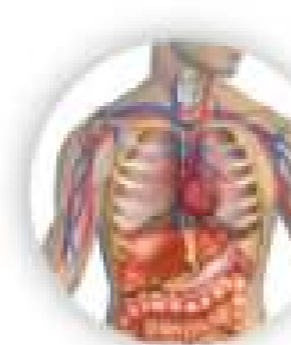
Other factors



Genetics or family history plays a role in some people with high BP.



High BP is the most common medical condition encountered during pregnancy. The condition is known as preeclampsia.



Secondary causes ie, kidney disease, endocrine disease, and malformations of blood vessels may contribute to high BP. This needs to be investigated especially in people below the age of 40 years.

Smoking and high blood pressure

Smoking is an important risk factor for high blood pressure (BP). When you smoke, your BP is temporarily raised and this increases your risk of damaged arteries. Continuous smoking induces narrowing and stiffness of the arteries which may persist for a decade after smoking cessation. The effects of tobacco can be disastrous to your health, more so if you are already at risk for high BP. Smoking can significantly increase the risk of secondary cardiovascular complications such as heart attack and stroke, and enhance kidney damage. Even secondhand smoke increases the risk of heart disease for non-smokers.



If you haven't given up smoking already, it certainly is well worth to do so not only for BP control but also for your overall health. You can find tips on smoking cessation [here](#).

How to know if I have high blood pressure?



High blood pressure (BP) is dubbed the 'silent killer' as symptoms are uncommon in the initial stages. This results in many people left undiagnosed and untreated. Some people experience the coincidental occurrence of certain symptoms such as headaches, nosebleed and fatigue. While these symptoms should not be ignored, they also are not reliable indicators of high BP. You should consult your doctor for a confirmed diagnosis of high BP.¹

Because high BP is usually not accompanied by symptoms, the best way to detect high BP is by always keeping track of your BP reading. Therefore, you should have your BP checked at least once a year as high BP can develop silently. Nevertheless, if you have already developed high

BP, timely detection, treatment and monitoring can help keep your BP in check. The following can be used as a guide on when to have your BP checked⁵

If you do not have high BP

You should have your BP checked at least once a year

As you get older

It is ideal to have it checked annually as there is a tendency for BP to increase with age

If your BP is on the high side of normal (130/85 mmHg–139/89 mmHg)

You should have your BP checked again within 3–6 months

Very high blood pressure readings

If you have very high blood pressure (BP) readings, you may notice the presence of certain symptoms, including^{6,7}:



Don't take chances. Keep regular tabs of your BP reading and stop the silent killer in its tracks!

References

- World Health Organization. A global brief on hypertension. Available at http://www.who.int/cardiovascular_diseases/publications/global_brief_hypertension/en/. Accessed 19 September, 2019.
- Blood Pressure UK. Smoking. Available at <http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/microsites/u40/Home/lifestyle/Smoking>. Accessed 19 September, 2019.
- UpToDate. Smoking and hypertension. Available at <http://www.uptodate.com/contents/smoking-and-hypertension>. Accessed 19 September, 2019.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking & tobacco use. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/health_effects/index.htm#heart. Accessed 19 September, 2019.
- Ministry of Health Malaysia. Clinical practice guidelines: Management of hypertension (4th Edition); 2013.
- NHS choices. High blood pressure (Hypertension)-symptoms. Available at [http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/blood-pressure-\(high\)/pages/symptoms.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/blood-pressure-(high)/pages/symptoms.aspx). Accessed 19 September, 2019.
- MSD Manual Consumer Version. High blood pressure (Hypertension). Available at <http://www.msdmanuals.com/home/heart-and-blood-vessel-disorders/high-blood-pressure/high-blood-pressure>. Accessed 19 September, 2019.