



What is Hypertension?

Hypertension (HTN) is a disorder characterized by chronically **high blood pressure**. It must be monitored, treated and controlled by medication, lifestyle changes, or a combination of both. "Blood pressure" is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps out blood. If this pressure rises and stays high over time, it can damage the body in many ways.

Main complications of persistent High blood pressure

Brain:

- Cerebrovascular accident (*strokes*)
- Hypertensive encephalopathy:
 - confusion*
 - headache*
 - convulsion*

Retina of eye:

- Hypertensive retinopathy

Heart:

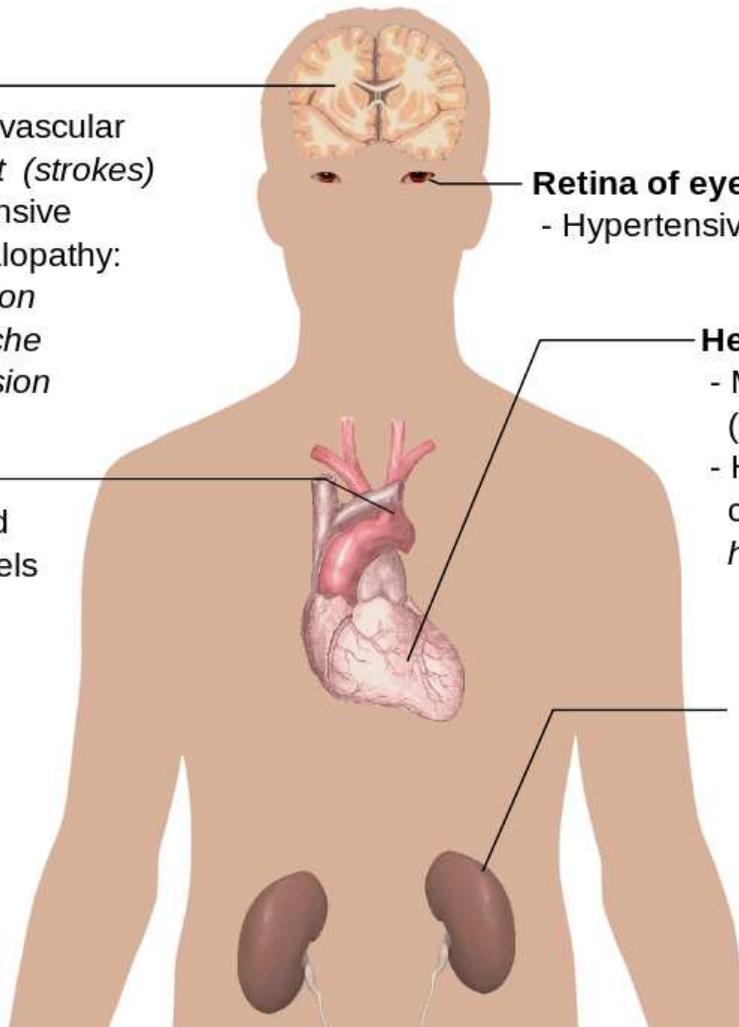
- Myocardial infarction (*heart attack*)
- Hypertensive cardiomyopathy:
 - heart failure*

Blood:

- Elevated sugar levels

Kidneys:

- Hypertensive nephropathy:
 - chronic renal failure*



HTN itself usually has **no symptoms**. You can have it for years without knowing it. During this time, though, it can damage the heart, blood vessels, kidneys, and other parts of your body. This is why knowing your blood pressure numbers is important, even when you're feeling fine. If your blood pressure is too high, you need treatment to prevent damage to your body's organs.

Blood pressure numbers include **systolic** (sis-TOL-ik) and **diastolic** (di-a-STOL-ik) pressures. Systolic blood pressure is the pressure when the heart beats while pumping blood. Diastolic blood pressure is the pressure when the heart is at rest between beats.

You will most often see blood pressure numbers written with the systolic number above or before the diastolic, such as 120/80 mmHg. (The mmHg is millimeters of mercury—the units used to measure blood pressure.)

The table below shows normal numbers for adults. It also shows which numbers put you at greater risk for health problems. Blood pressure tends to go up and down, even in people who have normal blood pressure. If your numbers stay above normal most of the time, you're at risk.

Guidelines for Blood Pressure Readings

| | Systolic | Diastolic |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Normal | Less than 120 | Less than 80 |
| Pre-High blood pressure | 120 - 139 | 80 - 89 |
| High Blood Pressure - Stage 1 | 140 - 159 | 90 - 99 |
| High Blood Pressure - Stage 2 | 160 or over | 100 or over |