Blood pressure is the **force of blood** pushing against your blood vessels (arteries). Your blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day, but if your blood pressure is **high for a long time**, it is called high blood pressure or **hypertension**. When your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder. If high blood pressure is not treated and controlled, it can cause a stroke, heart attack, kidney problems, heart failure, blindness, sexual dysfunction, and memory loss.¹

As you get older, your risk for high blood pressure increases. In Georgia, black or African American individuals are more likely to die from high blood pressure than other races.²

**Signs and Symptoms**
High blood pressure does not have any warning signs or symptoms. Most times, individuals are unaware they have high blood pressure unless they have their blood pressure checked. It is important to have regular visits with your doctor and healthcare team to have your blood pressure checked at least every year.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than</th>
<th>More than or equal to</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120/80</td>
<td>130/80</td>
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</table>

**Normal**

**High Blood Pressure**

**Diagnosis**
The American Heart Association considers a blood pressure reading high if the systolic (top number) is **130 or higher** or the diastolic (bottom number) is **80 or higher**. Your physician and healthcare team may use different standards at this time.¹

**Prevention and Management**
You can lower your risk of high blood pressure by changing your diet, exercising, losing weight, limiting your alcohol intake, quitting smoking, and managing stress. If you have high blood pressure, following these recommendations, in addition to taking your medications and self-monitoring your blood pressure, may help lower your risk of complications and your blood pressure.¹

**Eat more**: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, potassium (4,700mg per day)³

**Eat less**: sodium (1,500mg per day), saturated fats, trans fats, and added sugars

**Exercise**: 150 minutes per week

**Lose Weight**: Lose 5% of total body weight over 6 months if you are overweight or obese

**Limit Alcohol**: Women= up to 1 drink per day
Men= up to 2 drinks per day

**Quit Smoking**: Talk with your doctor about ways to quit smoking. Also, call the Georgia Tobacco Quit Line 1-877-270-STOP

**Manage Stress**: Visit a qualified mental health counselor or try meditation.

**Take Medications**: Take your medications as directed, and don’t stop taking your medications without talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

**Self-Monitor**: Check your blood pressure and heart rate at home with a blood pressure machine. Write down your blood pressure each time you take it. Report any high or low blood pressures and heart rates to your doctor.