

First Coast Cardiovascular Institute

Enjoy the Good Life By Controlling Blood Pressure

WHAT IS HYPERTENSION AND WHY IS IT TREATED?

Hypertension, or high blood pressure (HBP), has been called the "silent killer" with good reason. Usually, a person with high blood pressure has no symptoms despite the ongoing damage that HBP causes... until disaster strikes. Unless one has ones blood pressure checked, the first sign of the high blood pressure may be a disabling stroke. "Blood pressure" (BP) is the force exerted by the blood upon the walls of the arteries in the body. When this force is too high, these arteries can become damaged and this can ultimately lead to damage of the kidney, heart, eye, or brain. High blood pressure is a risk factor for many ailments, including heart attack, heart failure, kidney failure, and stroke. At First Coast Cardiovascular Institute, we often see patients with these long-term conditions caused by HBP. However, we prefer to help with the prevention of such complications.

Normal blood pressure in an adult is 120/80, or less. Hypertension is diagnosed with a BP greater than 140/90. Many people have a reading in-between these numbers, a condition called "pre-hypertension".

HOW CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

Occasionally, HBP can be due to another medical illness. However, the vast majority of time there is no other medical condition to correct. HBP is more common in African Americans, as people age, those with a family history of hypertension, those who are overweight, and those with "pre-hypertension". For all of us, but especially in those people at risk for hypertension, following a healthy lifestyle can lessen the severity of, delay the onset of, or

even prevent high blood pressure. Components of this healthy lifestyle include the loss of excess weight, eating less salt, exercise, limiting alcohol consumption, quitting smoking, getting at least 3,500 mg. of dietary potassium, and following a diet that is rich in fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products and is low in fat.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

The lifestyle changes mentioned above are still very important in the treatment of those with a diagnosis of hypertension. If ones HBP is mild and without signs of damage to the heart or other organs, your doctor will likely first recommend the above described lifestyle changes. If HBP persists despite these interventions, or if HBP is more severe, then medications are often prescribed. Many patients require several medications to maintain adequate BP control. Where appropriate, those with HBP who are successful in weight loss and in starting an exercise program will find their hypertension becomes easier to control, and the blood pressure measurements may even return to normal, thus eliminating the need

for medications!

CONCLUSION

The treatment of hypertension is important in preventing long term debilitating complications. The cornerstone of therapy is lifestyle changes. Where one is successful in initiating these changes, the need for medications is often lessened or even eliminated. Where necessary, medications are often used. If you do not tolerate your medications, do not simply stop the medication without consulting your physician, as the sudden cessation of some medications can be dangerous. At First Coast Cardiovascular Institute, we will work with you to find a regimen that will adequately treat your high blood pressure without causing side effects.

*"Excellence is not an accident, it is our life long commitment."
"Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is a love of humanity."*

Giving You New Hope

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