



YMCA Awards

Level 3 Promoting wellness
through client motivation and
interaction

2018

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High blood pressure

High blood pressure (hypertension)

Hypertension is a common condition which often has no symptoms and many individuals do not know they have it

The chance of developing hypertension increases with age

When blood pressure remains higher than normal for some time (at least several months), this is diagnosed as hypertension

Essential hypertension

For many individuals there is no specific reason why they have hypertension. About 90% of individuals with hypertension fall into this category

The exact causes of essential hypertension are unknown but family history and lifestyle play a role

Secondary hypertension

This is due to another condition and affects 10% of individuals with hypertension. Blood pressure may go back to normal once the other problem has been treated. Kidneys or adrenal glands problems can cause secondary hypertension

Risk factors (modifiable)

- Eating too much salt (sodium)
- Not eating enough fruit and vegetables
- Lack of physical activity
- Overweight
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Smoking
- Long-term sleep deprivation

Risk factors (non-modifiable)

- Increasing age
- Family history of hypertension
- African or Caribbean origin
- Kidney problems
- Hormone problems
- Diabetes (type 1 and 2)
- Lupus
- Obstructive sleep apnoea

Symptoms of high blood pressure

There are no obvious signs or symptoms but if left untreated, an individual's risk of serious problems such as heart attacks and strokes is increased. This is why it is often called the 'silent killer'

Some individuals may experience headaches or have problems with their vision

Hypertension is usually detected during an unrelated visit to a medical professional

Risks of high blood pressure

- Cardiovascular disease
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Damage to the blood vessels in the kidneys or eyes
- Kidney disease
- Some forms of dementia

The higher the blood pressure, the greater the risk

Reducing blood pressure levels by a small amount can help lower the risk

High blood pressure can be prevented or reduced by:

- Eating healthily
- Drinking alcohol in moderation
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Regular physical activity
- Not smoking

Regular exercise is very important for the health of the heart, lungs and blood vessels

It helps to make the heart and blood vessels more flexible and efficient, and it should help lower blood pressure

Ideal exercise is walking, jogging, swimming, cycling and dancing

Any activity that is very intensive for short periods of time should be avoided (e.g. sprinting, heavy weightlifting). These will quickly raise blood pressure and put unwanted strain on heart and blood vessels

