

Discharge Instructions for High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

You have been diagnosed with hypertension. Also called high blood pressure, this means the force of blood against your artery walls is too strong. It also means your heart is working hard to move blood. High blood pressure produces no symptoms, but over time it can damage your heart, blood vessels, eyes, and other organs. With help from your doctor, you can manage your blood pressure and protect your health.

Taking Medications

- Learn to take your own blood pressure. Keep a record of your results. Ask your doctor which readings mean that you need medical attention.
- Take your blood pressure medication exactly as directed. Don't skip doses. Missing doses may cause your blood pressure to get out of control.
- Avoid medications that contain heart stimulants, including over-the-counter drugs. Check for warnings about hypertension on the label.
- Check with your doctor before taking a decongestant. Some decongestants can worsen hypertension.

Lifestyle Changes

- Maintain a healthy weight. Get help to lose any extra pounds.
- Cut back on salt.
 - Limit canned, dried, packaged, and fast foods.
 - Don't add salt to your food at the table.
 - Season foods with herbs instead of salt when you cook.
- Begin an exercise program. Ask your doctor how to get started. You can benefit from simple activities like walking or gardening.
- Break the smoking habit. Enroll in a stop-smoking program to improve your chances of success.
- Limit drinks that contain caffeine (coffee, black or green tea, cola) to 2 per day.
- Never take stimulants such as amphetamines or cocaine; these drugs can be deadly for someone with hypertension.
- Control your stress. Learn stress-management techniques.

Follow-Up

Make a follow-up appointment as directed by our staff.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor immediately if you have any of the following:

- Chest pain or shortness of breath
- Moderate to severe headache
- Weakness in the muscles of your face, arms, or legs
- Trouble speaking
- Extreme drowsiness
- Confusion
- Fainting or dizziness
- Pulsating or rushing sound in your ears
- Unexplained nosebleed
- Weakness, tingling, or numbness of your face, arms, or legs
- Change in vision