



High Blood Pressure in Children and Teens

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Condition Basics

What is high blood pressure in children and teens?

Blood pressure is a measure of how hard the blood pushes against the walls of the arteries as it moves through the body. It's normal for your child's blood pressure to go up and down throughout the day. But if it stays up, your child has high blood pressure. Another name for high blood pressure is hypertension.

What is normal and what is high blood pressure depends on your child's age, sex, and height. The numbers change as your child grows.

Blood pressure is described with two numbers. For example, a child's reading might be 96/57 or "96 over 57."

- The first number is the systolic pressure. It shows how hard the blood pushes when the heart is pumping.
- The second number is the diastolic pressure. It shows how hard the blood pushes between heartbeats, when the heart is relaxed and filling with blood.

What causes it?

Doctors can't always say what causes high blood pressure. But several things make a child more likely to develop it. These include having a family history of high blood pressure and being overweight. It also can be caused by medicines or by other health problems, such as heart or kidney problems.

How is it diagnosed?

Children age 3 and older often have their blood pressure checked during routine doctor visits. If your child's blood pressure reads high, you may be asked to bring your child in again for another blood pressure check.

The doctor might have your child wear a portable device to measure blood pressure over 24 hours.

Your child may need more tests to check for illnesses that may be causing high blood pressure.

Why is high blood pressure a problem?

When blood pressure is a little high, it may increase the risk of health problems, such as heart conditions, later in life.

If blood pressure is very high, it can cause serious and immediate damage to a child's body, especially the heart and brain. This type of high blood pressure is rare.

How is high blood pressure treated in children and teens?

High blood pressure is treated in different ways. Treatment depends on how high the blood pressure is. When it's just a little high, doctors often treat it with a healthy lifestyle, like eating healthy foods and being active.

If the blood pressure is higher and if a healthy lifestyle doesn't help lower it enough, the doctor may recommend medicine.

If another health problem is causing the high blood pressure (secondary high blood pressure), treating the other health problem may lower the blood pressure. Your child may also need medicine to lower it.

How can you care for your child or teen who has high blood pressure?

Give your child healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Limit sodium and sugar. And help your child stay active. Consider less screen time. If your child takes medicine, try to make their pill schedule as simple as you can. Taking medicine at mealtime may help.

Related Information

- [Healthy Eating for Children](#)
- [Physical Activity for Children and Teens](#)

Credits

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