



WHAT IS HYPERTENSION? (HPT)

Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure. It is the pressure or force that your blood exerts on the walls of your blood vessels. The pressure is determined by the resistance of the blood vessels and how hard the heart has to work to pump the blood.

Hypertension is a huge risk factor for a stroke, heart attack/failure, kidney failure and heart disease.

WHAT CAUSES HYPERTENSION? (HPT)

Primary HPT or Essential HPT accounts for 95% of all known people living with HPT. In this category the cause is unknown. There are however, some associated factors like high salt intake, high fat diet, lack of exercise, Obesity, Stress, familial hypertension etc.

Secondary HPT accounts for only 5% of all known people living with HPT. The underlying causes of secondary HPT include Pregnancy-induced HPT, Kidney disease (Renal Failure), Diabetes Mellitus, Cushing syndrome, Congenital adrenal hyperplasia, Hyperthyroidism, Obesity, and sleep apnoea.

WHAT INCREASES THE RISK OF GETTING HYPERTENSION?

- Age: People over the age of 60 are more likely to suffer from hypertension as blood pressure increases due to arteries narrowing and stiffening due to plaque build-up.
- Ethnicity: Some ethnic groups are more prone to hypertension than others.
- Alcohol and smoking: Blood pressure increases with the regular consumption of large quantities of alcohol or tobacco.
- Gender: Men have a higher risk of developing hypertension. Post-menopausal women carry the same risk as men do.
- Existing health conditions: Cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease can lead to hypertension.
- Obesity: Being overweight or obese can increase your risk of hypertension.
- Family history of Blood pressure also predisposes you.

Other risk factors include:

- Inactive lifestyle
- High salt, high fat diet
- Low potassium intake

Poorly managed stress and a family history of high blood pressure are also risk factors that must be considered.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Most People with hypertension might not even know they have it (Asymptomatic), which is why it is known as the “**silent killer**”. This is why it is critical to check your blood pressure regularly, especially if you fall into any of the high-risk categories.



In very extreme and rare cases, hypertension can cause Headaches, Palpitations (Abnormal heart-beats), Sweating, a blushing effect, Sleeping problems, Nose bleeding and Anxiety symptoms.

Untreated hypertension can damage and erode the inside lining of blood vessels because of the high pressure of the blood travelling through the blood vessels. This will lead to plaques developing inside the blood vessel walls. This plaque will cause narrowing of the blood vessels thereby, exacerbating the hypertension as the heart now needs to pump harder in order to circulate the blood.

THIS CAN CAUSE HPT COMPLICATIONS LIKE:

- The Bulging or ballooning of a weak blood vessel (Aneurysm).
- The Kidneys lose the ability to filter waste in your blood (Kidney failure).
- The Heart losing its ability to pump enough blood into the circulation (Heart failure).
- Clot formation within the blood vessels that supply the heart with blood (Heart attack).
- Clot formation within the brains' own blood vessels (Stroke).

Regular blood pressure monitoring can help people avoid these severe complications.



WHAT IS THE NORMAL LEVEL OF BLOOD PRESSURE?

People's blood pressure readings differ and they change every day. Blood pressure can vary depending on acute illnesses, recent stressful events, recent caffeine intake, or even smoking. That is why it is important to measure a resting blood pressure and measure it more than once.

Blood pressure is expressed with fraction type readings ie. **120/80 mm/Hg (millimetres of mercury)**.

The top value is the **systolic pressure** which is normally at 120 mm/Hg. This value can range from 100 to 139 mm/Hg.

The bottom value is called the **diastolic pressure** which is normally at 80 mm/Hg, and it can range from 70 to 90 mm/Hg.

Categories of blood pressure.

Low Blood Pressure: Systolic BP less than 100 mm/Hg

Normal Blood Pressure: Systolic BP = 100 to 139 mm/Hg

High Blood Pressure: Systolic BP more than 140 mm/Hg

Diastolic BP less than 69mm/Hg

Diastolic BP = 70 to 90mm/Hg

Diastolic BP more 90mm/Hg

HOW YOUR DOCTOR WILL DIAGNOSE BLOOD PRESSURE

The initial diagnosis must be made by a medical professional (Clinic Sister or a Medical Doctor). The diagnosis of HPT is made by confirming high/elevated blood pressure readings on more than two occasions at different times.

HPT is a chronic medical condition (life-long) hence it is important that an accurate diagnosis is made. Often, the doctor will ask you to come back after a day or two to confirm his/her findings. However, if the blood pressure is too high, the doctor may diagnose it and put you on medication immediately.

HOW DO YOU MEASURE YOUR OWN BLOOD PRESSURE?

A blood pressure monitor, or sphygmomanometer, is used to check blood pressure. It is applied over the bare upper arm and readings are available immediately. It is not necessary to visit a doctor/clinic each time, once a diagnosis is made and you can accurately interpret your readings. Poorly managed stress and a family history of high blood pressure are also risk factors that must be considered.

Portable blood pressure monitors are available to purchase for home use.

Hypertension readings that are consistently higher than 140/90 millimetres of mercury (mmHg), need consultation and confirmation of HPT.

HOW TO MANAGE AND TREAT HYPERTENSION

Lifestyle changes is the first important step of treatment. These changes include:

Diet: Following a heart-healthy diet can lower your blood pressure. This includes reducing your salt and fat intake (fast foods and red meat), drinking less alcohol (max of two units per day), and eating more fruit and vegetables.



Exercising regularly: All people should get 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week. This includes activities like walking, swimming, cycling, or jogging.

Reducing stress: Learning how to manage your stress levels goes a long way in reducing your blood pressure. Various relaxation techniques like yoga, long walks, meditation, and warm baths are all beneficial in some way.

Managing your body weight: Regular exercise and a regular healthy diet contribute to reducing body weight, which will reduce your risks of hypertension and related illnesses.

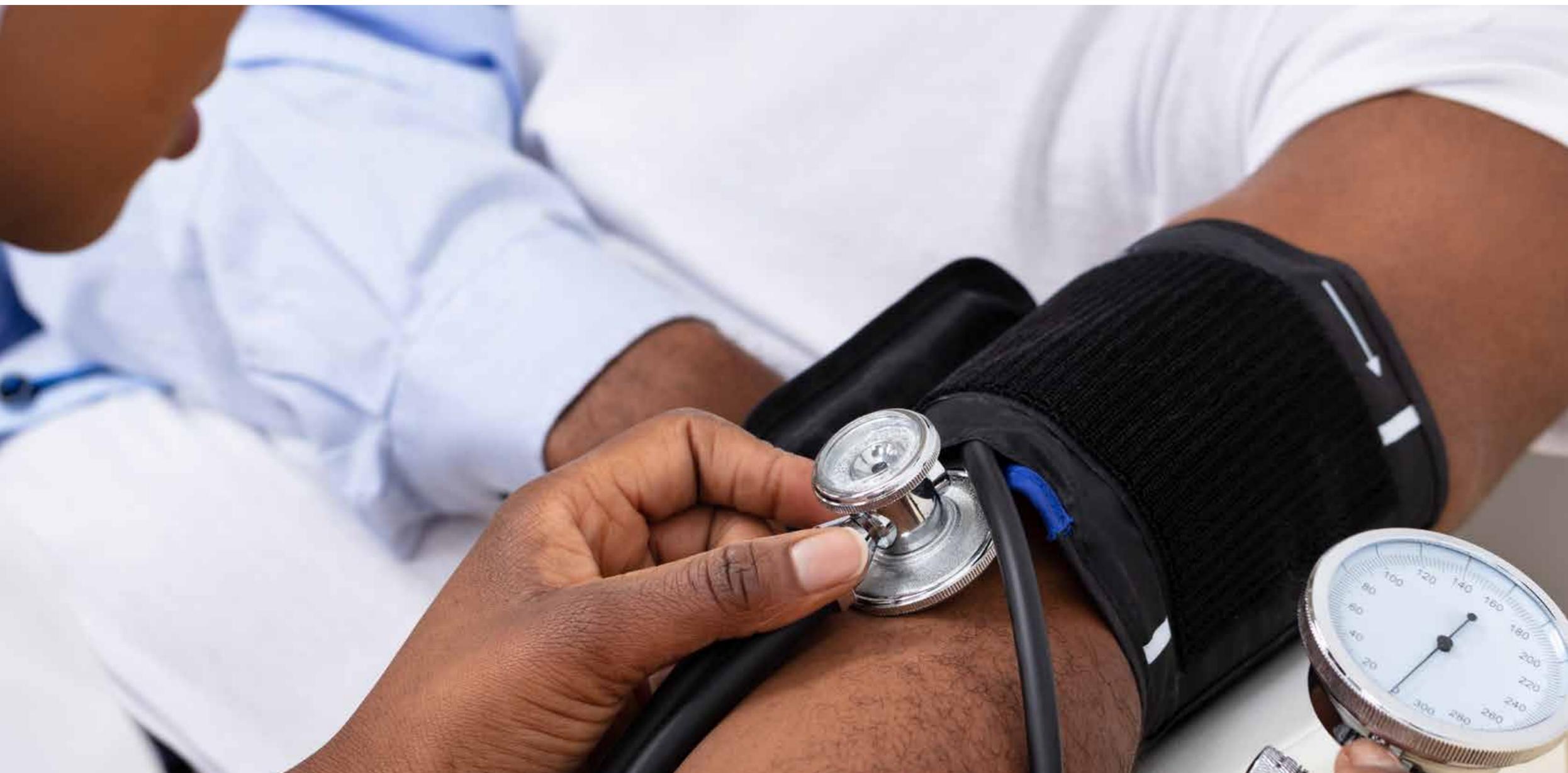
MEDICATION

Once all the above measures have failed to reduce the blood pressure, the doctor will initiate and prescribe medication that is suitable for you to treat the HPT.

All medication have side effects which are normally experienced at the beginning of your treatment, but as time goes on, the side effects lessen or become bearable.

If the side-effects are not bearable, the doctor will evaluate the side-effects and consider other classes of medication which give minimal side-effects and control your blood pressure at a normal level.

Keeping your mind and body healthy are vital if you wish to avoid hypertension and its associated illnesses. If you are concerned about your blood pressure or your heart health in general, visit your nearest Clinix hospital to have one of our doctors assess you, your life could be saved.



SOURCES:

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Directors: