Hypertension Management

Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

The Black population is one of the populations greatly affected by Hypertension or High Blood Pressure. Blacks are 2 to 3 times at greater risk of developing Hypertension and are also likely to be diagnosed at much earlier age than other communities. African American men suffer disproportionately from high blood pressure, a known risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is a measure of the pressure or force of blood against the walls of your blood vessels (known as arteries). Your blood pressure reading is based on two measures called systolic and diastolic. The systolic (top) number is the measure of the pressure force when your heart contracts and pushes out the blood. The diastolic (bottom) number is the measure of when your heart relaxes between beats.

The table below defines varying blood pressure categories: low risk, medium risk, high risk. See your doctor or healthcare provider to get a proper blood pressure measurement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Systolic / Diastolic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low risk</td>
<td>120 / 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium risk</td>
<td>121-139 / 80-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High risk</td>
<td>140+ / 90</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There are some exceptions to these categories.

For people living with diabetes, the high risk category for your blood pressure is slightly lower and should be less than 130 / 80. Consult a healthcare provider if your blood pressure level is higher than 130 / 80 on more than one occasion.

Low Blood Pressure

Low blood pressure is when the pressure in your arteries drops and your heart is pumping your blood at a slower rate than normal through your blood vessels. Blood pressure levels below 120 / 80 may be considered normal unless you feel light-headed or dizzy. Your healthcare provider can help you determine if you have low blood pressure.

How does high blood pressure cause heart disease and stroke?

Over time, high blood pressure can damage blood vessel walls, causing scarring that promotes the build-up of fatty plaque. This build-up can narrow and eventually block arteries. It also strains the heart and eventually weakens it. Very high blood pressure can cause blood vessels in the brain to burst resulting in a stroke.

How to manage your hypertension

You can make changes to your lifestyle that will help you control your blood pressure. Your doctor might prescribe medications that can help you. By controlling your blood pressure, you will lower your risk for the harmful effects of high blood pressure.

TAIBU has implemented a Hypertension Management Program – an inter-professional team of Physicians/Nurse Practitioners, Dietitian and Nurse – will support you in identifying realistic goals and objectives in your journey of implementing lifestyle changes and managing your High Blood Pressure.

The program includes among other things:

- Prescriptions and follow up
- Education and Awareness
- Nutrition Counselling & Education
- Physical Activity/Exercise Sessions
- Smoking Cessation Program and Support
- Social Work support [dealing with Social Determinants of Health including Income, unemployment] and Stress Management

If you require additional information or if you want to access the Hypertension Management Program at TAIBU please call 416 644 3536.