High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

What is blood pressure?
The heart pumps blood around your body through blood vessels called arteries. Blood pressure is the force that the blood places on the walls of your arteries as it moves.

Blood pressure is measured by placing a cuff around your upper arm and inflating (making it bigger by adding air to it) it. A stethoscope is placed over the artery below the cuff so that we can hear your pulse.

The blood pressure measurement is written as 2 numbers, for example, 120/80 (read as “120 over 80”). The upper number (systolic blood pressure) is the force on the artery walls when the heart pumps. The lower number (diastolic blood pressure) is the force on the artery walls when the heart rests between beats.

What are your questions? Please ask. We are here to help you.
What is high blood pressure?
You have high blood pressure if it is higher than 140/90 when checked 3 times at monthly visits. The medical name for high blood pressure is hypertension.

Sometimes other medical problems can cause your blood pressure to be high. Your doctor will examine you and may order tests to find out if you have such a problem. If you do, correcting the problem may also correct your high blood pressure. If not, then you have essential hypertension (high blood pressure).

No one knows what causes essential hypertension. The risk of having high blood pressure is higher if you have family members who have it, if you are overweight, have diabetes, drink too much alcohol, eat too much salt, or do not exercise.

There are usually no symptoms of high blood pressure. That is why it is important to have annual checkups with your doctor. If high blood pressure is not treated, it can cause damage to your arteries that can lead to strokes, heart disease, or kidney problems.
Treatment

Healthy eating
Losing weight and cutting back on salt can help to control your blood pressure. Drinking too much coffee, tea, or cola can raise your blood pressure.

Following a low-fat diet is important – it will help you to keep a healthy weight and healthy cholesterol levels.

Eating a balanced diet can help control your blood pressure.

Exercise regularly
Regular exercise can help to control your blood pressure and your weight. It can also help to relieve stress. For many people, the best exercise is walking. However, your doctor, nurse, or physiotherapist can help you choose the exercise that is best for you.
Drink alcohol in moderation
Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink will also help to control your blood pressure. You should not drink more than two 12-ounce beers, two ounces of hard liquor, or two 4-ounce glasses of wine **per day**, as a general rule. Talk with your health care provider about drinking in moderation.

Medication
You may be given medication to treat your high blood pressure. A variety of medications are available. You may need to take more than one type. Sometimes medication does not work as well as it should or causes side effects. It is very important to call your doctor right away about any problems you may have with a medication. Your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist can give you information about each medication that you are taking. You must take your medication **every day**, as ordered by your doctor. If you stop taking your medication, your blood pressure will rise again.

Stress
Stress is a natural part of everyone’s life. However, stress can raise your blood pressure. Learning healthy coping skills will help you to manage stress and prevent health problems.
Stop smoking
Smoking can cause problems with your heart and blood vessels. If you smoke and take medication for high blood pressure, your medication may not work as well as it should. It is very important to stop smoking. Ask your nurse or doctor for information to help you stop.

See your family health care provider regularly
Keep your appointments with your family health care provider. Report any problems or concerns to your family health care provider right away.

High blood pressure is a chronic (ongoing), long-term disease.
There is no cure, but it can be controlled. Controlling your blood pressure can help you to live a longer and healthier life!