



Hypertension (high blood pressure)

UniCare Health Plan of West Virginia, Inc. (UniCare) has a care management program for hypertension. This program will help you better understand and manage your hypertension. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your lifestyle. You do not have to join the program. You are enrolled as a member of UniCare.

Living with hypertension

Hypertension is also called high blood pressure. It is the measurement of the force against the walls of your arteries as the heart pumps blood through your body.

We want you to know that you can take control. Simple steps like eating less salt and fat in your diet and taking your medications correctly can make a real difference.

We will keep your doctor informed of your condition and the services we provide you. Your case manager can help you learn how to better manage your hypertension.

Things to know:

- Most of the time there are no symptoms of hypertension. That is why it has been called the silent killer.
- When blood pressure is too high, it starts to damage the blood vessels, heart and kidneys.
- Untreated high blood pressure can cause major health problems such as heart disease, stroke, heart attack, heart failure and kidney disease.
- Your doctor may want to do testing to see how your blood pressure is doing.

Tips to monitor your hypertension:

- Your doctor may want you to take your blood pressure at home. Your doctor or a nurse can show you how to take your blood pressure the right way.
- Work with your case manager to learn about home monitoring.
- Learn what your blood pressure reading means.
 1. Blood pressure readings have two numbers.
 2. Systolic is the first number, for example, the 120 in 120/80. It measures the pressure when the heart is pumping.
 3. Diastolic is the second number, for example, the 80 in 120/80. It measures the pressure when the heart is resting.
- Healthy adults should have a blood pressure of 120/80 or less.
- Hypertension or high blood pressure is 140/90 or higher.
- You should have your blood pressure checked on a regular basis.
- Your doctor will monitor your blood pressure during your checkups and follow-up visits.
- Recognize signs that your hypertension is getting worse.
 1. You may have no other signs beside your blood pressure reading.
 2. If your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher two or more times, call your doctor.



3. Ask your doctor when you should seek medical attention for high blood pressure.
4. Some people may have headaches, problems with their eyesight, nausea or vomiting. These can be caused by dangerously high blood pressure, called malignant high blood pressure. It may also be called hypertensive crisis. This is a medical emergency. **You should get medical help right away.**
5. Call your doctor right away if you believe headaches or other symptoms are due to hypertension.

How to take your hypertension medications:

- Medications are prescribed differently for each person. Your doctor will work with you to find the right medicine for you.
- If you do not take your medications the way your doctor says, the medications may not work as well. It is best to take your medications about the same time every day.
- Don't take over-the-counter medicines including cold medicines and herbal supplements without talking to your doctor. They can prevent your medications from working the right way.
- Call your doctor if you think you are having side effects from your medication.

Ways you can improve or manage your hypertension:

- Quit smoking. Quitting smoking can make a big improvement in controlling your blood pressure. We have programs, and there are medications that can assist you in stopping smoking.
- Make short- and long-term goals. We can assist you to make healthy changes one small step at a time to improve your hypertension.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. Even a few pounds can make a difference. We can help you make changes to your diet to fit your life.
- Talk with your doctor about how much salt or sodium should be in your diet.
- Get a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor if you should have the pneumonia vaccine.

Support to help you manage your hypertension:

- We can help you talk to your family or caregiver about your hypertension
- We can assist you in finding community programs and resources in your area
- Tips to talk with your doctor and get the most out of your visit:
 1. Ask any questions you may have about your high blood pressure. You can write them down and take them with you to your visit.
 2. Follow your doctor's advice. If you have questions or concerns, let your doctor know.
 3. Make sure your doctor knows what medicines you are taking.

Important screenings:

- Depression
- Other health conditions
- Preventive care screenings such as wellness checkups, mammograms and Pap tests



Other helpful information:

- [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#)
- [Medline Plus](#)
- [American Heart Association](#)
- [National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute](#)

Sources:

* National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute

What is Artherosclerosis?

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/atherosclerosis/>, accessed November 8, 2013.

* American Heart Association www.heart.org/HEARTORG/

* Publication: Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure

National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hbp_low/index.htm, accessed November 8, 2013.

*Healthfinder.gov

Use Medicines Safely

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely>, accessed November 8, 2013.

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