What is high blood pressure?

Normal blood pressure is defined as 120/80. High blood pressure is defined as 140/90. If your blood pressure is near or above 140/90 consistently, it should be brought to the attention of a physician.

The condition of hypertension (high blood pressure) is often called “essential” or primary hypertension if there is no obvious underlying cause. More than 95 percent of all high blood pressure cases are essential hypertension. When there is an identifiable cause for the high blood pressure, it is called secondary hypertension.

What causes high blood pressure?

In the case of essential hypertension, there is no identifiable cause. Contributing factors may include stress, obesity, smoking, high salt intake, and alcohol use. Other factors may be hereditary, age, and gender.

What are the symptoms?

In most cases of high blood pressure, there are no symptoms. High blood pressure tends to be a silent disease. After many months or years of high blood pressure, one may experience a heart attack, a stroke, or kidney failure. Common symptoms of severe high blood pressure are headache, dizziness, racing irregular heartbeat, easy fatigability, chest pain, or shortness of breath.

How is hypertension diagnosed?

The only way to diagnose hypertension is to check your blood pressure consistently. Often high blood pressure is detected on routine physical exams.

How is it treated?

Untreated high blood pressure is dangerous and invariably leads to life-threatening problems such as stroke, heart attack, heart failure, and kidney failure.

Mild high blood pressure may be treated with weight loss, exercise, dietary modification, salt restriction, and stress reduction. If this does not result in a significant reduction in high blood pressure, then high blood pressure can be treated with medication.

When taking high blood pressure medication, it is important to take it regularly. It is important to be informed by your healthcare provider or the pharmacist about potential side effects. If you experience any side effects, these should be reported to your healthcare provider. Additionally, it is important to have regular checkups to monitor the effectiveness of your high blood pressure treatment. Most individuals with high blood pressure need a lifetime treatment plan unless interventions such as healthy eating habits and exercise lower his or her blood pressure sufficiently. Although most cases of high blood pressure cannot be cured, it can be controlled and should be consistently monitored.