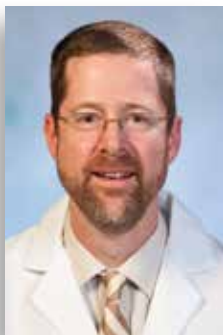


Blood pressure:

Maintaining healthy numbers can help prevent heart attacks, stroke



Morton T. Saunders Jr., D.O., Summa Physicians Inc. – Family Medicine, discusses why it is important for individuals to monitor their blood pressure (or hypertension).

thrive: What is blood pressure?

Dr. Saunders: Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps. If the pressure rises and stays high for a period of time, the body can be damaged in many ways.

thrive: Why is it important for individuals to have their blood pressure checked?

Dr. Saunders: A person can have high blood pressure for years without knowing it. During this time, high blood pressure can damage the heart, blood vessels, kidneys and other parts of the body.

thrive: How often should individuals have their blood pressure checked?

Dr. Saunders: It should be checked at least once a year by a healthcare provider. It's actually never too early to start. Pediatricians routinely check blood pressure of their patients at yearly exams. Waiting to have your blood pressure taken until you're in your 40s or 50s could put you at risk for life-threatening complications.

thrive: Does high blood pressure affect men and women differently?

Dr. Saunders: The guidelines say blood pressure should be less than 140/90 in all adult patients. A higher percentage of men than women have high blood pressure until about age 45. From ages 45 to 54 and 55 to 64, the percentages of men and women with high blood pressure is similar. After age 64, a much higher percentage of women have high blood pressure than men. In less than 25 years, one in five adults will be age 65 or older and advancing age increases the risk of high blood pressure (hypertension).

thrive: What can individuals do to control their blood pressure?

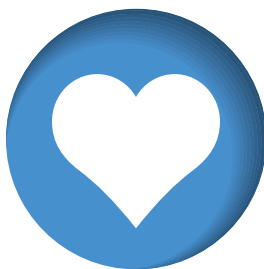
Dr. Saunders: Smoking clearly increases the risk of high blood pressure. Smokers who don't have their blood pressure checked at least once a year are doing themselves a disservice. A healthy diet and weight are also important. A diet should include fruits, vegetables and meats that are not processed or breaded. You should also control your intake of salt, carbohydrates and sugar.

thrive: Without regularly seeing your primary care physician, how will people know whether they have high blood pressure?

know your numbers

Dr. Saunders: My patients ask me this question all of the time. Unfortunately, at the very best you won't know until you experience symptoms of headaches, dizziness and sweating. This could indicate that you're at imminent risk of suffering a heart attack or stroke. At this point, you need to call 9-1-1 and get to an emergency room. That's why it's so important to have regular examinations where your pressure can be checked.

High blood pressure typically develops over many years. But it can easily be detected. Once patients know they have high blood pressure, they can work with their primary care physician to control it. To make an appointment with a Summa Physicians Inc. doctor, call (800) 237-8662, ext. 234. ■



Blood pressure levels in adults

	Systolic (top number)		Diastolic (bottom number)
Normal	Less than 120	And	Less than 80
Prehypertension	120 - 139	Or	80 - 89
High Blood Pressure			
Stage 1	140 - 159	Or	90 - 99
Stage 2	160 or higher	Or	100 or higher



What do the numbers mean?

Systolic (top number)

Blood pressure associated with the contraction of the heart muscle (when the heart beats)

Diastolic (bottom number)

Blood pressure associated with the relaxation phase of the heart (when the heart is at rest between beats)



Blood pressure levels vary by race, ethnicity

African-Americans develop high blood pressure more often and at an earlier age than whites and Hispanics. More African-American women than men have high blood pressure. *Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Race of Ethnic Group	Men (%)	Women (%)
African-Americans	43.0	45.7
Mexican-Americans	27.8	28.9
Whites	33.9	31.3
All	34.1	32.7



High blood pressure can lead to

- ✓ Coronary heart disease (heart attack)
- ✓ Heart failure
- ✓ Stroke
- ✓ Kidney failure

