Blood pressure is a measure of how hard the blood pushes against the walls of your arteries as it moves through your body. It is normal for blood pressure to go up and down throughout the day. If it stays up, you have high blood pressure.

**How is blood pressure measured?**

- A blood pressure cuff is inflated around your upper arm. This stops the blood from flowing through the artery in your arm.
- The cuff is slowly deflated. A stethoscope (steth-uh-skope) placed on the inside of your elbow picks up the sound of the blood beginning to flow through the artery again.
- As the cuff deflates even more, the sound eventually stops.

**Blood pressure is recorded as two measurements:**

1. Systolic pressure (the upper number): This is the reading when blood flow is first heard. It is the highest pressure that occurs when your heart beats.

2. Diastolic pressure (the lower number): This is the reading when blood flow can no longer be heard. It’s the lowest pressure that occurs when your heart relaxes between beats.
For your doctor to confirm that you have high blood pressure, your blood pressure must be at least 140/90 on three or more separate occasions. This condition is also known as hypertension.

**Symptoms of High Blood Pressure**

High blood pressure is known as the silent killer because there are rarely any symptoms. When blood pressure is very high, it can result in:

- Very bad headache
- Vision problems
- Difficulty breathing
- Blood in the urine
- Fatigue or confusion
- Chest pain
- Irregular heartbeat
- Noise or buzzing in ears

Most people need to be checked to detect high blood pressure. Long term high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure, clogged blood vessels, and kidney failure. That is why it is so important to treat high blood pressure.

Use this chart to determine if you have high blood pressure based on your blood pressure checks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood Pressure Category</th>
<th>Systolic mm Hg (upper number)</th>
<th>Diastolic mm Hg (lower number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>less than 120</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prehypertension</td>
<td>120 – 139</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1</td>
<td>140 – 159</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2</td>
<td>160 or higher</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: American Heart Association*

If you have any questions, please call your doctor's office to speak with a nurse.