

Hypertension

<p>What is it?</p>	<p>Hypertension is also known as high blood pressure. A healthy blood pressure for children depends on sex, age and height. About 6-8% of children have elevated blood pressure.</p> <p><i>For children less than age 13, a healthy blood pressure is considered <90th percentile for sex, age and height.</i></p> <p><i>For children ages 13 and older, a healthy blood pressure is less than 120/80.</i></p>
<p>Why is recognizing hypertension important?</p>	<p>It is important to control blood pressure and maintain it in a healthy range beginning in childhood. Over time, high blood pressure can cause irreversible changes to the blood vessels, the heart and other organs.</p> <p>In adults, hypertension can ultimately lead to poor outcomes including myocardial infarction (heart attacks), strokes, kidney failure, and even death.</p>
<p>When and how is hypertension diagnosed?</p>	<p><i>The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that blood pressures be checked annually beginning at the 3 year old well child visit.</i> If blood pressures are elevated, children will be referred to a cardiologist for further workup.</p> <p>It is recommended that upper arm blood pressure cuffs be used in children, instead of wrist or forearm blood pressure cuffs. Blood pressures can be measured manually or with a machine.</p>
<p>What are risk factors to developing high blood pressure?</p>	<p>Several factors can contribute to high blood pressure. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family history/genetics ● Obesity ● Race ● Low birth weight or prematurity ● Congenital heart disease ● Medications or other substances including stimulants, caffeine or tobacco ● Emotions including stress or anxiety ● Other medical conditions: thyroid, kidney or hormonal disorders, diabetes and sleep apnea
<p>What other workup may be performed?</p>	<p>Several other tests may be performed if your child has hypertension. These tests can include ultrasounds of the kidney or heart (an echocardiogram). Bloodwork may also be ordered. An ambulatory blood pressure monitor (a blood pressure cuff that is worn for 24 hours at home) may be ordered to screen for “white coat hypertension” (high blood pressure seen at medical appointments).</p>
<p>How is it treated?</p>	<p>Lifestyle modifications including dietary changes and increasing regular vigorous physical activity are usually the first step in lowering blood pressure. If blood pressure remains persistently high despite several months of these changes, medications may be started.</p>