



MINISTRY OF  
**HEALTH &  
WELLNESS**



# hypertension

*Know your numbers-It Figures!.. Control It & Live Longer.*

**TALKING POINTS**

## **HYPERTENSION: ‘KNOW YOUR NUMBERS’**

Hypertension, traditionally called ‘Pressure’, is one of the leading causes of illness and death in the Jamaican population.

Hypertension occurs when the force exerted against arterial walls is abnormally high. Just as too much water pressure can damage pipes and faucets, high blood pressure causes blood to be pressured through the arteries.

Your blood pressure (BP) number is based on 2 numbers called “systolic” and “diastolic” blood pressure. For example, for a blood pressure reading of 120/80 mm Hg:

**120:** Top number (systolic BP) measures the force of blood rushing against artery walls when your heart contracts during a heartbeat.

**80:** Bottom number (diastolic BP) represents the pressure in your heart when it relaxes between beats.

**Normal:** Blood pressure numbers of less than 120/80 are considered within the normal range. If your results fall into this category, stick with heart-healthy habits like following a balanced diet, getting regular exercise and maintaining a healthy weight.

**Elevated:** Elevated blood pressure is when readings consistently range from 120-139 mm Hg systolic and 80-89 mm Hg diastolic. People with elevated blood pressure are likely to develop high blood pressure unless steps are taken to control the condition.

**High:** Sustained elevation of an individual's blood pressure at or above 140/90 mm Hg is TROUBLE.

**There are two main types of Hypertension:**

- Primary or Essential Hypertension is the most common type of high blood pressure. It develops over time as you get older, and you are more likely to get it if others in your family have it. There is also no direct cause associated with getting this type of Hypertension.
- Secondary Hypertension is caused by another medical condition (such as kidney disease or a hormonal condition) or use of certain medicines (such as steroids). If your Hypertension is caused by another medical condition or medicine, treating that condition or stopping the medicine may lower your blood pressure.

Sometimes pregnancy contributes to high blood pressure as well – **Pregnancy Induced Hypertension.**

## ***How common is Hypertension?***

Hypertension is the most common chronic condition that is managed by primary care physicians and other health practitioners, and is one of the major health issues facing Jamaica. Data from the most recent national survey (Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey 2016-2017), found that approximately 34% of Jamaicans 15 years and older years are affected - this works out to more that 800,000 persons island wide - and 40% of these persons are unaware of their condition.

Hypertension and its complications known as Cardiovascular Disease (such as stroke, heart attack and heart failure) are leading causes of death in Jamaica, with 33.7% of all deaths being caused by Cardiovascular Disease.

The data further suggested that this disease was more prevalent among the rural population at 35.2%, than the urban population at 33%. Of those diagnosed 70% are on medication but only 30% of those on medication are controlled.

## ***Are you at risk of getting Hypertension?***

Common risk factors for developing hypertension include:

- ageing
- family history of Hypertension
- physical inactivity
- unhealthy eating
- overweight or obesity
- excess alcohol intake
- smoking
- stress

## ***Is Hypertension serious?***

The higher your blood pressure and the longer your blood pressure remains high, the more likely persons will develop major complications called ‘end organ damage’, which include serious irreversible conditions like hypertensive heart disease, ischaemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease (stroke), chronic kidney disease, retinopathy (eye disease) and peripheral vascular disease (poor circulation).

**Cardiovascular Disease** refers to a group of irreversible conditions affecting the heart (“cardio”) and blood vessels (“vascular”) and are usually associated with damage caused by persistent uncontrolled hypertension, as well as overweight/obesity, abnormal blood fats levels and elevated blood sugar.

### ***What are the symptoms and signs?***

Hypertension is often called the “silent killer” as because persons whose blood pressure is elevated or high usually don’t have any symptoms or pain, even though significant end organ damage can occur without feeling ill.

Without symptoms or pain very often people do not know they are in danger. Very high blood pressure is a medical emergency which requires immediate medical attention.

Symptoms of very high blood pressure include:

- Severe headaches
- Nosebleed
- Fatigue or confusion
- Vision problems

- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Irregular heartbeat
- Blood in the urine

### ***What can I do to control Hypertension?***

- Eat healthy - more fruits and vegetables, less salt and fat
- Be active - at least 30 minutes a day
- If you smoke, quit
- If you drink, ask your doctor how much is right for you
- Get regular check-ups with your doctor
- Take your blood pressure medication as prescribed
- Know your blood pressure numbers and work toward achieving the goals set with your doctor

### ***Checking your Blood Pressure***

Everyone should know their blood pressure numbers. The earlier abnormal blood pressure levels are detected, the sooner the condition can be brought under control to prevent irreversible damage to

organs, and the more control you have over your heart health. Prevention is better than cure...it just makes sense!

Persons are urged to check their blood pressure regularly to screen for this condition, and manage their blood pressure appropriately once Hypertension is diagnosed. Children and adolescent should get a blood pressure check every other year, or annually if they have risk factors for Hypertension. Adults 20 years and older should get a blood pressure check at least once a year, or more frequently if they have risk factors for Hypertension

**Check your blood pressure by using a sphygmomanometer (blood pressure machine).**



## MOHW Commemorates World Hypertension Day | WED. MAY 17

- Extensive media interviews (TV & Radio)
- Press Releases and Feature Stories (Gleaner/Observer)
- Minister Tufton's message as Full page Insertions (Gleaner/Observer)
- I.G. Live Conversation themed, ***'Know Your Numbers-It Figure!...Control It & Live Longer*** featuring:- Consultant Physician, Dr. Karen Phillips and Health Coach Ms. Natalie Murray. This event will be a discussion on/around Hypertension, the importance of good lifestyle habits with the last 15 mins. dedicated to an exercise session where the kids are also invited
- SMS-World Hypertension Awareness message courtesy of our Partner DIGICEL
- 'Kick-off' -a social media 'Know your Numbers' Trivia on Social Media. (Prizes to be included)
- Launch the 'make the music'. A Hypertension Jingle promotion on Instagram
- Virtual Training Session for primary care clinicians on National Screening Guidelines for Hypertension and Cardiovascular Disease on May 19, 2021 at 6:30pm



**thank you**