



**Wolverhampton
Diabetes Care**

Hypertension and Diabetes

Why is hypertension important?

Hypertension is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke and the kidney and eye complications of diabetes. Hypertension is about twice as common in people with diabetes. Appropriate anti-hypertensive therapy gives strong protection against diabetes complications.

High blood pressure is also known as hypertension. Hypertension occurs more frequently in people with diabetes than in the general population.

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What causes hypertension?

There is usually no single cause. Lifestyle factors such as being overweight, drinking too much alcohol, smoking, getting too little exercise and eating an unhealthy diet and too much salt all affect blood pressure. It is more common as we get older. Hypertension can run in families and in certain ethnic groups such as the Afro-Caribbean and South Asian populations, who are particularly at risk. In some people, hypertension may be caused by an underlying problem such as kidney disorders.

What are the symptoms?

Hypertension itself rarely causes symptoms until the strain on the heart and arteries leads to problems. In the heart this can cause chest pain and breathlessness, in the brain it can cause a stroke and it cause the kidneys to fail and worsen the diabetic effects on the eyes.

How is it diagnosed?

Blood pressure should be checked regularly or more often in certain situations. Checking blood pressure is quick, simple and painless. A person is usually considered to have hypertension if they have a measurement that is consistently over 140/90 mmHg. The top number, which is called the systolic pressure, shows the pressure in you arteries when your heart is forcing blood through them. The bottom number called the diastolic pressure, shows the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart relaxes. You may need some tests to see if hypertension is having an effect on the rest of your body. These may include urine and blood to check the condition of your kidneys, a chest x-ray and heart recording to identify any strain or enlargement of the heart muscles and eye checks.

How is it treated?

High blood pressure is not usually something that can be cured, but it can be treated. If eating a healthier diet and making lifestyle changes do not reduce your blood pressure to normal. However, it may well be necessary to take one or more blood pressure medications.

Seeking advice and what care to expect

Be sure to have your blood pressure checked regularly and know if it is in the acceptable range. If it is high, you should have full advice on how to change your lifestyle, some basic tests and an explanation of what medication is needed. You should be seen regularly until the situation is under control. Your blood pressure should come to be less than 140 for the top number. For more information, seek advice from your GP or Practice Nurse.