



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Hypertension

Hypertension, which is persistently high blood pressure, is among the leading risk factors for stroke and heart disease. Fortunately, high blood pressure can be lowered with proper treatment. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Systolic Blood Pressure	The first (and also higher) number reported in a blood pressure measurement. It is the maximal pressure measured in the arteries and occurs when the heart contracts.
Diastolic Blood Pressure	The second (and also lower) number reported in a blood pressure measurement. It is the lowest pressure of blood against the blood vessels, and it is measured when the heart is in its most relaxed state.
Pre-Hypertension	When either the systolic or diastolic blood pressure is at the upper end of the normal range. Usually, a lifestyle change or medical treatment is necessary to prevent the condition from advancing to hypertension.
White Coat Hypertension	Sometimes, people only have high blood pressure results at the doctor's office or during times of stress, which is described as white coat hypertension. Results checked at a pharmacy or using a home blood pressure cuff may still be normal.
Hypotension	Low blood pressure. Hypotension often causes lightheadedness or balance problems. It can result from dehydration, illness, medications, or low blood volume.
Malignant Hypertension	Severe hypertension can cause emergency problems such as heart attacks or strokes, and may result in loss of consciousness.
Cardiovascular Disease	The blood vessels of the heart, brain, and the rest of the body can become damaged and inflexible over time, increasing the risk of heart attacks, strokes, or blood clots. Hypertension is one of the leading risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
Metabolic Syndrome	A combination of borderline high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, and higher-than-optimal weight increases the risk of developing diabetes. Management of all of these factors can help reduce that risk.
Atherosclerosis	Disease within the arteries may consist of irregular blood vessels that are inflexible. Atherosclerosis exacerbates hypertension, hypertension exacerbates atherosclerosis, and both increase the risk of disease-producing blood clots.
Plaque	A small or large growth on the inside of a blood vessel. It is usually composed of cholesterol, fat, and blood clots. Hypertension and atherosclerosis increase the chance of developing plaques, which increase the risk of disease-producing obstruction (blockage) of an artery.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your hypertension.

About Symptoms

- Are there any symptoms of high blood pressure that I need to watch out for?
- What are the long-term effects of high blood pressure?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Is high blood pressure genetic?
- How is blood pressure related to diabetes, high cholesterol, and obesity?

About Diagnosis

- How often do I need to have my blood pressure checked?
- Can I measure my own blood pressure at home?

About Treatment

- Can I skip my medications if I experience side effects?
- Will I need to take blood pressure-lowering medications for the rest of my life?
- Are there any other strategies that can lower my blood pressure besides medication?

About Coping

- Can anxiety affect my blood pressure?

About Living With Hypertension

- Should I follow a low salt diet?
- Can I exercise if I have high blood pressure?
- Are there any restrictions on my activities because of my high blood pressure?
