WHAT IS HYPERTENSION (HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE)?

High blood pressure is a blood pressure reading of 130/90 mmHg or higher. Both numbers are important. The good news is that it can be treated and controlled.

What is blood pressure, and how is it measured?

Blood is carried from the heart to all parts of your body in vessels called arteries. Blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. Each time the heart beats (about 60-70 times a minute at rest), it pumps out blood into the arteries.

Your blood pressure is at its highest when the heart beats, pumping the blood. This is called systolic pressure. When the heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is the diastolic pressure.

You usually hear blood pressure described as two numbers. These are called the systolic (top) and diastolic (bottom) readings. These readings are often recorded as a fraction, with systolic over diastolic. For example: 120/70.

Blood pressure measurements will change during the course of the day. They will change depending on your activity level. Blood pressure is lower during periods of sleep and will usually rise in response to exercise. It also can rise when you are excited, nervous, or active.

What causes high blood pressure?

In 90-95% of the cases, high blood pressure has no known cause. In a small number of people, high blood pressure is the result of another medical problem like kidney problems.

Why should I care if I have high blood pressure?

High blood pressure is called "the silent killer" because it usually has no symptoms. Some people may not find out they have it until they have trouble with their heart, brain, or kidneys. When high blood pressure is not found and treated, it can cause:

◆ Stroke ◆ Heart attack ◆ Kidney failure ◆ Blindness ◆
How do I know if I have high blood pressure?

A blood pressure of 140/90 or higher is considered high blood pressure. Both numbers are important. If one or both numbers are usually high, you have high blood pressure. If you are being treated for high blood pressure, you still have high blood pressure even if you have repeated readings in the normal range.

Hypertension can be further classified for adults* as follows: (see the chart below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Systolic reading (Top Number)</th>
<th>Diastolic reading (Bottom Number)</th>
<th>Medical Follow-up Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>less than 120</td>
<td>less than 80</td>
<td>Recheck in 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prehypertension</td>
<td>120-129</td>
<td>Less than 80</td>
<td>Recheck in 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure</td>
<td>Top Number</td>
<td>Bottom Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>130-139</td>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>Confirm with a doctor within 2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>140-180</td>
<td>90 or higher</td>
<td>See a doctor within one month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Over 180</td>
<td>over 120</td>
<td>Evaluate immediately (see doctor or go to the ER – emergency room)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For adults 18 and older who:
  - Are not on medicine for high blood pressure
  - Are not having a short-term serious illness
  - Do not have other conditions such as diabetes and kidney disease

Exception: If you have diabetes or chronic kidney disease, you have high blood pressure if your top number is 130 or higher, OR your bottom number is 80 or higher.

References
National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, National High Blood Pressure Education Program, The Sixth Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation

Why is High Blood Pressure Bad?

People who have high blood pressure that is allowed to go untreated are at increased risk of developing serious conditions such as heart disease, heart failure, stroke, kidney failure, and eye damage (retinopathy).
**What are the Signs and Symptoms of High Blood Pressure?**

High blood pressure is called "the silent killer" because you can have it for years without knowing it. The only way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure measured. It is important to find out if you have high blood pressure and if you do, to keep it under control.

**What can I do to manage my blood pressure?**

**Visit the Free Drop-In High Blood Pressure Clinic**

Every Thursday from 2:00pm – 4:00pm at the Over Sixty Health Center on the corner of Alcatraz and Sacramento. No insurance necessary, all ages welcomed. Vincente Cordero for more information: 510-549-5419; vcordero@lifelongmedical.org

Every Monday from 10:00-12:00pm at the South Berkeley Senior Center at 2939 Ellis St, Berkeley.

Every Wednesday from 10:00-12:00pm at the North Berkeley Senior Center at 1901 Hearst Avenue Berkeley.

**Quit Smoking**

**FREE** quit smoking classes are offered by the City of Berkeley Tobacco Prevention Program. For more information, please call 981-5330 or e-mail QuitNow@cityofberkeley.info

**Make Four Lifestyle Changes**

**Eat Breakfast!** Breakfast can help you have more energy. It can also make you feel better and think more clearly. Eating breakfast can also help reduce your reaction to stress and tiredness. Research has shown that people who do eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight. Start your day with a low-fat and whole grain breakfast. Try eating fruit, whole wheat or multi-grain breads, and low fat milk.

**Eat your Colors!** Eat fruits and vegetables at least 5 times a day. Fruits and vegetables provide minerals and vitamins that your body needs and are good sources of natural fiber. Fiber lowers blood sugar, lowers cholesterol, and can help control your weight. Have a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables everyday at meals or for a snack.

**Get Active!** Physical activity is the best thing you can do. It helps you burn calories and lose fat. Try to do at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 to 7 days each week. Shorter periods several times a day such as 10 minutes, 3 times a day will work too. Walk, dance, work in the yard, or do any activity you enjoy. Just get moving!
Reduce Stress! Even though we cannot always control or change our lives, we can learn to control or change how we respond to stressful events. Getting physically active and stretching your body are some ways to relax and stay calm. Here are other ways to help you relax: Get enough sleep, think good thoughts, and try deep breathing exercises.

Name__________________________

My Blood Pressure __________ Date __________ Time __________

My Blood Pressure __________ Date __________ Time __________

My Blood Pressure __________ Date __________ Time __________