

# How Does Hypertension Effect Blood Pressure?

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Blood pressure represents the amount of pressure exerted against the inside walls of the arteries. Blood pressures are typically written as the systolic pressure over the diastolic pressure. For instance, a systolic blood pressure of 120 and a [diastolic blood pressure](#) of 80 would be written 120/80 or described as "120 over 80." Blood pressure is typically measured using a sphygmomanometer or blood pressure cuff.

There are many reasons why blood pressures (either the systolic and/or diastolic pressures) can be elevated. Commonly referred to as hypertension, high blood pressure can be essential hypertension or secondary hypertension. Essential hypertension is the most common in adult men and women and has no particular cause. Risk factors like obesity, salt sensitivity, insulin resistance, age and genetic predisposition to hypertension are common causes of essential hypertension. Secondary hypertension is usually caused by some other disease, such as sleep apnea, tumors or Cushing's syndrome.

Chronic hypertension can exert abnormally high pressures against the walls of the arteries, eventually causing damage to the interior walls of the blood vessels (particularly the arteries) and various body organs. Individuals with hypertension can experience abnormally high systolic blood pressure. This is the force of the blood pressing against the walls of the arteries. They can also experience elevated diastolic blood pressure when some of the elasticity of the arterial walls is lost, causing the arteries to become more rigid.

Hypertension is treated by lowering the patient's body weight, avoiding sodium in the diet, getting more [exercise](#) and often times taking hypertension medication.