

High Blood Pressure During Pregnancy and Your Risk for Heart Disease

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure (hypertension) means the pressure of the blood inside your arteries is at a level higher than normal.

Your blood pressure has two numbers:

- The top number (systolic) shows the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats.
- The bottom number (diastolic) shows the pressure in your arteries when your heart rests.

During pregnancy, you have high blood pressure if your top number is more than 140 and the bottom number is more than 90.

Heart Disease

Heart disease is a term that describes different types of heart conditions. There are many different types of heart disease including:

- coronary artery disease
- high blood pressure
- peripheral artery disease
- heart failure
- valve disease.

Your Risk for Heart Disease

Women who have high blood pressure, preeclampsia or both during pregnancy have an increased risk of other conditions later in life. These include high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.

Women are at a greater risk of having heart disease if they had:

- early (preterm) preeclampsia
- a very small baby with preeclampsia
- preeclampsia more than once.

Talk with your health care provider about your risk level. Together, you and your health care provider can decide what type of care is right for you.

Lowering Your Risk of Heart Disease

You can help your heart and your health by managing your risk factors and living a healthy lifestyle. Risk factors are behaviors, habits or conditions that can put your heart at a high risk for problems.

There are several risk factors you can control. The major risk factors are tobacco use, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and being overweight.

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What you can do

- Maintain a body weight that is right for you.
- Get moving.
 - Walking is an excellent way to exercise. Or, find something else you will do on a regular basis. Start slowly and work your way up to 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.
 - Be sure to follow any instructions given to you by your health care provider.
- Quit tobacco use.
- Choose healthful foods and beverages.
 - Eat fewer foods high in sugar, sodium (salt), saturated fat and trans fat.
 - Eat more foods that are high in fiber, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds.
- Control your blood glucose, if you have diabetes.

You should also schedule yearly visits with your primary care provider to have to have your blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol and weight checked.