

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Blood Pressure

What is blood pressure?

• Blood pressure is the force of blood against your artery walls as it circulates through your body. The organs in your body need oxygen to survive. Oxygen is carried through the body by the blood. When the heart beats, it creates pressure that pushes blood through arteries and veins, also known as blood vessels and capillaries. The pressure --- blood pressure --- is the result of two forces. The first force occurs as blood pumps out of the heart and into the arteries that are part of the circulatory system. The second force is created as the heart rests between heart beats.

What does my blood pressure number mean?

• The first number is the systolic number, and represents the pressure when your heart beats. The second number is the diastolic number and represents the pressure when your heart is at rest.

Stages of Blood Pressure Levels

- Normal blood pressure—less than 120/80
- Prehypertension—120/80 or higher, but less than 140/90
- Stage 1 high blood pressure—140/90 to 159/99
- Stage 2 high blood pressure—160/100 or higher

What does it mean to have a high blood pressure?

- High blood pressure means the force of blood against your artery walls is higher than it should be.
- High Blood Pressure can be fatal or lead to serious health problems.
- When blood pressure is higher than normal most of the time, it starts to damage the blood vessels, heart, and kidneys. This can lead to heart attack, stroke, and other heart disease.

Why does [athlete] need to see a doctor for this?

• High Blood Pressure needs to be addressed so it is not damaging a person's body. A plan to reduce blood pressure or medication may be prescribed.

If I have high blood pressure, how can I take care of myself or manage my blood pressure level?

- Eat a better diet, which may include reducing salt and eating foods high in potassium like fruits, vegetables and legumes (beans).
 - Do regular physical activity
 - Maintain a healthy weight
 - Manage stress
 - Avoid tobacco smoke
 - If you drink, limit alcohol
 - Limit caffeine consumption
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What causes high blood pressure?

- Many things can cause high blood pressure. Some unhealthy behaviors can contribute to high blood pressure such as not exercising enough, being overweight, smoking tobacco, or eating foods high in sodium. You should talk to your doctor about what might be causing high blood pressure and how you can prevent it in the future.
- It is also important that you talk to your doctor to make sure that you are not taking any medications that might raise blood pressure.

Why didn't I know that [athlete] had high blood pressure before?

- High blood pressure does not usually have warning signs or symptoms; so many people don't realize they have it. The only way to find out is to have a doctor or health care professional measure it.

What is the treatment for high blood pressure?

- It is best to talk to your doctor about potential treatments. We recommend you make an appointment with a primary care doctor to learn more. Possible recommendations include lifestyle changes or medication.

When should I worry about low pressure?

- Low blood pressure is a level lower than 90/60
- Low pressure is not an issue unless you have some of the following symptoms: dizziness or lightheadedness; fainting; dehydration and unusual thirst; lack of concentration; blurred vision; nausea; cold, clammy, pale skin; rapid, shallow breathing; fatigue; depression
- If you have any of the above symptoms you should see a doctor.

We do not currently have a doctor - what should I do?

- Talk with your SO Program as they be able to direct you to resources to help find a doctor or medical care.

Where can I learn more information?

- For more information on blood pressure, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/>