



## HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)

- **Having high blood pressure increases your risk of heart attack, stroke, and heart failure.**
- **What causes hypertension?** There is no one specific cause, but all the following can contribute to it:
  - Age (men older than 55 and women older than 65)
  - Race
  - Family history of high blood pressure, heart disease, or stroke
  - Being overweight
  - Not exercising enough
  - Drinking too much alcohol
  - Using tobacco (smoking or chewing)
  - Eating an unhealthy diet that has too much salt or not enough potassium
  - Your doctor will also do tests to make sure there isn't another medical problem (such as anemia) that is contributing to your high blood pressure.
- **How is it treated?** There is no cure, but high blood pressure can be controlled
  - **Lifestyle changes**
    - Exercise regularly (activities that raise your heart rate and keep it up for at least 20-30 minutes)
    - Switch to a healthy low-salt diet
    - Lose weight if your doctor recommends it
    - Quit smoking
  - **Medication**
    - It may take more than one medicine to lower your blood pressure to a normal level
    - It is important that you take your medicines every day as prescribed
      - If you skip your medication, your blood pressure will go back up.
      - It can be dangerous to suddenly stop your medicines
      - If you think you are experiencing side effects, call your doctor before stopping the medication, unless the symptoms are severe.
    - *BE SURE to take your medicines on the day of your follow-up appointment – if the medicine is not in your system, we cannot tell if it is working.*