

# YOUR HEALTH & WELL BEING



CIGNA HealthCare  
A Business of Caring.

## Detecting and Treating High Blood Pressure

When you have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, the force of blood against your artery walls is too strong. Over time, high blood pressure can damage the inner lining of the blood vessels, making it easier for cholesterol and other substances to build up. This process is called atherosclerosis.

### Did You Know?

Did you know that your family health history often provides clues to your own health? The Health Quotient™ Health Risk Assessment on myCIGNA.com helps you assess and monitor your health status using an online questionnaire. Find out how your family health history may affect you, learn about preventive care and check your progress toward health goals.

High blood pressure also increases the workload on the heart, especially the left ventricle, which may become thick and stiff. This can affect the heart's pumping ability and may lead to heart failure. Untreated high blood pressure increases the risk of coronary artery disease and other heart problems, aneurysms, stroke, kidney problems and eye problems.

### KNOW YOUR MEASUREMENTS

High blood pressure can be treated effectively with lifestyle changes and medications that can reduce the risk of complications. The first thing you need to do is understand the measurements. Your blood pressure measurement consists of two numbers. The systolic measurement, the first or top number of a blood pressure reading, is the pressure of blood against your artery walls when the heart has just finished contracting and pumping out blood. The diastolic measurement, the second or bottom number in a blood pressure reading, is the pressure of blood against your artery walls between heartbeats when the heart is relaxed and filling with blood.

*Based on these measurements:*

- High blood pressure (hypertension) is 140/90 or higher;
- Pre-hypertension is 120-139/80-89; and
- Normal blood pressure is 119/79 or lower.

### KNOW YOUR RISK

In most cases, a doctor may not be able to pinpoint the exact cause of your high blood pressure. But several factors are known to increase blood pressure, including:

- A family history of high blood pressure.
- Aging.
- Sodium (salt) intake.
- Excessive alcohol consumption.
- Low intake of potassium, magnesium and calcium.
- Obesity.

Some factors, such as salt intake and alcohol consumption, are lifestyle issues that you can control. Other factors, such as your family history, are not controllable.

### KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

**If you fall into the pre-hypertension range (120–139/80–89 mm Hg),** your doctor will likely recommend lifestyle modifications, including losing excess weight, exercising, limiting alcohol, cutting back on salt, quitting smoking and following the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet. The DASH eating plan is a low-fat and low-saturated-fat diet that emphasizes eating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods.

**If you have high blood pressure (140–159/90–99 mm Hg)** and you do not have any organ damage or other risk factors for heart disease, your doctor will likely recommend lifestyle changes and possibly medications. Most

(continued on back)

## HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

(continued from front)

people with high blood pressure will need two or more medications to lower their blood pressure.

**If your blood pressure is 160–179/100–109 mm Hg or higher**, you and your doctor may need to try various combinations of medications to find what works best for you. You also will need to make aggressive lifestyle changes.

Overall, your treatment will depend upon how high your blood pressure is, whether you have other medical conditions such as diabetes, and whether any organs have been damaged. Your risk of developing other diseases, especially heart disease, will be another important factor your doctor will consider.

### Did You Know?

Did you know that you can ease your mind and body with these five stress relievers?

1. Move your body. Regular exercise is a good way to reduce stress.
2. Tell a joke. Laughter is a great stress release.
3. Relax your mind. Take a mental vacation to your favorite spot.
4. Breathe deeply. Take a deep breath, hold it and then slowly exhale.
5. Write it out. Take pen to paper and write about a stressful experience.

## HealthQuotient™ Health Risk Assessment

# Get Informed, Then Get Control

You're ready to make a commitment to better health. But first, you need to better understand your personal health situation. Are there specific factors that contribute to your health? Are they hereditary? Are they controllable? Is there a healthy living plan out there that meets your unique needs?

If you're asking these questions, then you're ready to take WebMD's HealthQuotient™ Health Risk Assessment – a personal health management tool available to you on myCIGNA.com. And through the assessment, you'll learn what you need to get better control of your health and well-being.

*Using a brief online questionnaire, HealthQuotient can help you:*

- Identify and monitor your personal health status;
- Find out how social, environmental and family history may affect your health and well-being;
- Learn more about preventive care; and
- Be better prepared to have a discussion with your doctor.

The Health Quotient Health Risk Assessment is just one of many tools CIGNA HealthCare offers on myCIGNA.com to help you make the most of the time you spend planning, managing and understanding your health benefits.



"CIGNA HealthCare" refers to various operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation. Products and services are provided by these subsidiaries and not by CIGNA Corporation. These subsidiaries include Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Tel-Drug, Inc. and its affiliates, CIGNA Behavioral Health, Inc., Intracorp, and HMO or service company subsidiaries of CIGNA Health Corporation and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. In Arizona, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of Arizona, Inc. In California, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of California, Inc. In Virginia, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of Virginia, Inc. and CIGNA HealthCare Mid-Atlantic, Inc. In North Carolina, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of North Carolina, Inc. All other medical plans in these states are insured or administered by Connecticut General Life Insurance Company.



**CIGNA HealthCare**  
*A Business of Caring.*

Information reprinted from CIGNA HealthCare Well Being.