



What is hypertension?

Hypertension is the medical word for high blood pressure (BP). BP is the force of the blood pushing against the walls of arteries. Arteries are tubes that carry blood from the heart to other parts of the body. Things like activities or stress can cause high BP for a short time. High BP during activities or from stress is normal. BP should only be measured when a child is not active or stressed. Hypertension is diagnosed when BP readings stay high over time.

Does my child really have hypertension?

Your child is coming to the nephrology clinic to determine if they have hypertension.

What happens during the clinic visit?

The care team:

- Will ask questions about your child's symptoms and BP readings.
- Will check your child's BP:
 - When they are calm. BP readings are higher if your child is crying, moving or in pain.
 - Again (possibly more than 1 time) if the first BP reading is high. The care team will use the average to decide if your child has hypertension.
- May order tests like:
 - Urine tests
 - Blood tests (labs)
 - Kidney ultrasound
 - Heart ultrasound (echo)
- Will ask your child to come back to our clinic or see their pediatrician or other primary care provider (PCP) depending on the results.

It is normal for your child's BP to be higher when they are nervous in the doctor's office. It is sometimes better to check their BP at home. The care team may advise for:

- Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM) at home. ABPM measures your child's BP many times over 24 hours. BP is even measured while your child is sleeping and walking outside.
- Home BP checks at different times. The care team will teach you how to take your child's BP. They will recommend BP devices that you can buy to use at home.

What causes hypertension in children?

There are 2 types of hypertension in children:

- Primary hypertension (also called essential hypertension). This is most often caused by having a family history of hypertension and by being overweight or eating too much salt (sodium).
- Secondary hypertension. The most common causes are:
 - Medicine side effects
 - Premature birth (born very early)
 - Kidney problems

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Hypertension: first clinic visit, continued

What is the treatment?

The treatments for primary hypertension are:

- Making lifestyle changes. This may include changes in diet and increased activity (exercise).
- Taking blood pressure medicine. Your child may not need medicine if lifestyle changes make their BP normal.

The treatments for secondary hypertension are:

- Managing the problem causing the hypertension.
- Taking blood pressure medicine. Children with secondary hypertension often need medicine.

What could happen without treatment?

It is important to treat hypertension early to prevent serious health problems. Without treatment, your child may develop:

- Headaches or vision problems
- Heart problems
- Brain injury
- Kidney problems

Where is the best place to get my child's BP checked?

- It is usually best to get your child's BP checked in our clinic or the office of the pediatrician or other PCP.
- Our clinic team may suggest ABPM or home BP checks. For children getting medicine for high BP, we often recommend doing home BP checks or asking the school nurse to check the BP.

Can my child play sports with high BP?

Most often, playing sports and staying active are encouraged for children with high BP. Some children with very high BP need to wait to play active sports like football, basketball, baseball and soccer until the care team says it is OK. Please ask us if it OK for your child to play sports.

When should I contact the clinic?

Contact us by calling 404-785-8010 or by sending a message in MYchart if you:

- Have questions about the treatment plan.
- Need a refill for medicine prescribed by our clinic care team.
- Have any questions about the dose of medicine your child should be taking.
- Think your child is having a medicine side effect.
- Think your child may be having low BP because of BP medicines. Symptoms of low BP include having low energy levels throughout the day or fainting or feeling light-headed when standing.
- Think your child may be having symptoms of high BP. Symptoms of high BP include headache and changes in vision.
- Notice home BP readings are at a level that your provider told you to call us.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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