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Managing high blood pressure with chronic kidney disease: Stages 1—4

More than half of people with chronic kidney disease (CKD) also have high blood pressure. High blood pressure can cause CKD, and CKD can also cause high blood pressure. No matter the cause, high blood pressure can damage your kidneys, heart, and blood vessels, so it's important to keep it under control.

What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against your blood vessel walls as your heart pumps blood through your body. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, occurs when this force becomes too high. Untreated high blood pressure can lead to heart attack, stroke heart failure, and faster progression of kidney disease.

High blood pressure and your kidneys

Over time, high blood pressure damages your blood vessels and reduces blood supply to your organs, including your kidneys. This causes your kidneys not to function as well and makes it hard for them to remove waste and extra fluid from your blood.

Checking your blood pressure

Blood pressure is checked by using an arm blood pressure cuff. It should be checked every time you visit your doctors. Your doctors might also recommend checking your blood pressure at home and keeping a daily record.

Choosing the right blood pressure cuff

If you check your blood pressure at home, make sure you have an arm blood pressure cuff. Cuffs that go around the wrist, finger, or other sites are not accurate.

Arm blood pressure cuffs come in different sizes. It is important to get the right size cuff for accurate readings. You can figure out your cuff size by measuring your upper arm. Wrap a tape measure around the midpoint and compare that number to a blood pressure cuff size chart.

This serves only as a guide. Talk with your healthcare provider for more information based on your health needs.

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Managing high blood pressure

Take steps to manage your blood pressure, including:

Eating a healthy diet
Your care team can help you create a nutrition plan that is low in sodium and rich in wholesome foods such as fruits and vegetables to help lower blood pressure.

Exercising regularly
Adding regular physical activity can help you lower your blood pressure and maintain a healthy weight. Talk to your care team before starting an exercise routine.

Stopping smoking if you're a smoker
Smoking and using tobacco products can increase your blood pressure. Your care team can provide support to help you quit.

Maintaining a healthy weight
Your care team can help you determine your ideal weight. Losing weight if needed can help lower your blood pressure.

Managing other health conditions
Managing conditions like diabetes and high cholesterol can help lower your heart disease risk. Follow a healthy lifestyle and take your medications as prescribed to help manage these conditions.

Avoiding or limiting alcohol
Ask your care team for help reducing your alcohol use. Guidelines suggest no more than one drink per day for women and two for men.

We are here to help

Your Interwell Health Care Team can provide education to help you manage your blood pressure. Reach out whenever you have questions or need support.

Medications for high blood pressure

You may be prescribed medications to help reach your target blood pressure. Common classes of blood pressure medications include:

- Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors or angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs)
- Diuretics
- Calcium-channel blockers

You may also be prescribed beta blockers, aldosterone antagonists, alpha blockers, centrally acting alpha-agonists, and vasodilators.

Because high blood pressure usually has no symptoms, it's important to take your medications exactly as prescribed, even if you feel fine.

Check with your care team if you're unsure about your blood pressure medications or before taking any new medicines, even over-the-counter ones. Some cold and flu ingredients, like phenylephrine and pseudoephedrine, can raise blood pressure.

When to contact your doctor

- Your blood pressure readings are consistently above your target range.
- You're experiencing symptoms like shortness of breath, severe headaches, blurred vision, or confusion.
- You've started a new medication and are noticing higher blood pressure readings.
- Your blood pressure readings are consistently below 90/60 mmHg and/or you're experiencing low blood pressure symptoms like dizziness, lightheadedness, or passing out.

Call 911 or go to the emergency room if you experience chest pain, vomiting, trouble finding words, slurred speech, or fainting.