



University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Abrons Student Health Center

## INSTRUCTION SHEET: HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE READINGS

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed high blood pressure. Your blood pressure readings taken at the Student Health Center were high.

These high readings do not necessarily mean you have a serious problem with high blood pressure (hypertension). Many people have elevated blood pressures in doctors' offices; factors which cause elevated readings include pain, just being up and active, and the anxiety of a medical care visit.

However, some people with elevated blood pressure readings in the doctor's office *do* have hypertension.

The most important pearl to remember about today's elevated blood pressure readings is that your blood pressure needs to be checked again, but in a more comfortable situation. To obtain accurate readings, blood pressure should be checked after you are sitting or lying down in a quiet, dark room for ten minutes. If these readings are elevated, you should schedule a follow-up appointment as directed for evaluation and possible treatment of elevated blood pressure.

### FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ELEVATED BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION):

1. Hypertension is usually silent: Most people have no symptoms with elevated blood pressure; they are not even aware they have high blood pressure.
2. Elevated blood pressure rarely needs immediate treatment. However, long-term treatment is important. Blood pressure remaining elevated over many years causes damage to the heart, the kidneys, and blood vessels. Heart attacks, kidney failure, and strokes can result.
3. Treatment of hypertension should begin with safe and simple changes in lifestyle:
  - a. Minimize salt intake. The average American diet contains far more salt than the body needs. Excessive salt intake contributes to hypertension.
  - b. If you are overweight, lose weight using a safe and sensible diet. A reduction in weight often controls blood pressure.
  - c. Minimize and/or learn to deal with stress in your life.

Medications to treat high blood pressure should ideally be used only after these changes in lifestyle are made. Blood pressure medications are generally safe and effective — but, like any medicine, they cost money and can have side effects.

Your blood pressure readings today were: \_\_\_\_\_