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HYPERTENSION INFORMATION SHEET

You have been diagnosed with hypertension (high blood pressure). This condition, known as the “silent killer,” is very important to manage and monitor carefully. You have been provided with a “worksheet” on which you are encouraged to record your heart rate and blood pressure. Note that there is a column for TIME as well as DATE. Blood pressure can vary significantly during the day, and any pattern you can help us establish may help in your successful treatment. You are also encouraged to bring your BP cuff to the office with you to check its accuracy. Inaccurate readings at home are not helpful, and may even be dangerous if they are used to guide your treatment.

It is important to know that although high BP has been established as a significant risk factor for 50 years, it is also known that **if the blood pressure is successfully controlled with diet, weight loss, exercise, and medications, a patient’s prognosis for good health and survival is the same as for the normal non-hypertensive population.**

Failure to control hypertension carries multiple important health risks, affecting multiple vital organs:

The pressure itself can damage the arteries that are carrying the blood at higher pressures. This may increase the risk of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries, and clogging of the arteries) that can lead to heart attacks and strokes. You may be walking around with a blood pressure of 160/100 and feeling fine, while inside your arteries, there is increasing plaque buildup which years later may cause a disabling, or even fatal, heart attack or stroke. This is why it is known as the silent killer.

In addition, since your heart has to pump against this higher pressure, the muscles of the heart wall may become progressively thickened and stiff, leading to symptoms of shortness of breath. Eventually, the heart will simply “fail” in its efforts to pump against this pressure and you may develop heart failure. High blood pressure is a very common cause of heart failure.

Your kidneys, which filter the blood in your body and produce urine, may also be damaged. The filtering mechanism itself is injured by the high pressures, and may gradually lead to decreasing kidney function, even without symptoms, and ultimately result in the need for dialysis. High blood pressure is among the most common causes of kidney failure in the US.

For additional reading on hypertension, several websites will provide excellent information:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001502/>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypertension>
http://www.medicinenet.com/high_blood_pressure/article.htm
<http://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/default.htm>