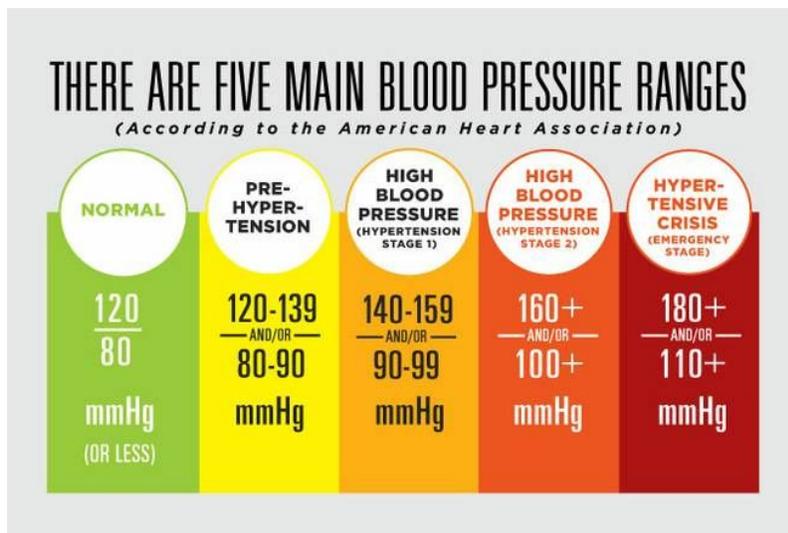


How Blood Pressure Can Affect Your Health

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EH102

Obtaining a blood pressure on a patient is one of the first skills you learn in a medical assisting program. Blood pressure along with temperature, pulse, respiration, height and weight, all make up the standard vital signs that medical professionals use daily. Every patient gets assessed with these vital signs to give a baseline for their health. According to the Webster Dictionary the definition of blood pressure is: “pressure that is exerted by the blood upon the walls of the blood vessels and especially arteries”. Now, there are normal ranges to this pressure and alarming ranges to this pressure. Normal blood pressure is 120/80. These numbers are referred to as systolic (top) and diastolic (bottom) numbers, which measure the contraction and expansion of the heart respectively. However, along with the normal ranges there are abnormal ranges as well. For example, hypertension or high blood pressure is a common occurrence for many people. The range for hypertension is 130/90 and above. Chronic hypertension can lead to



multiple health conditions, such as heart attack, and stroke.

Having your blood pressure checked often and maintaining a good blood pressure is good practice for keeping a healthy lifestyle.

To begin checking your blood pressure on a regular basis you can either buy a mechanical blood pressure cuff or visit your local doctors office where they can perform a manual blood pressure check. Manual blood pressure historically has been more accurate than

mechanical blood pressure. To begin taking a blood pressure you need to gather the appropriate equipment in order to obtain a blood pressure measurement. First, you will need a stethoscope and a blood pressure cuff to obtain a blood pressure (Easy Auscultation, 1). Next, you will need your patient in the proper position and comfortable. It's important for your patient to sit as still and quiet as they can to ensure the reading is accurate. Now that you have everything you need to obtain a blood pressure, it is time to perform the skill.



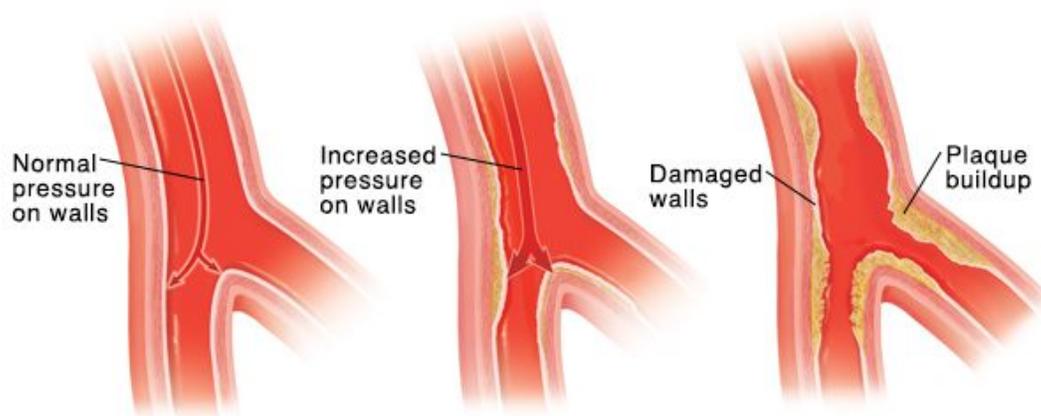
First you will place the cuff around the bicep and align the cuff correctly just above the antecubital fossa. The antecubital fossa is the medical term for the inner portion of the elbow. Then you will need to place the stethoscope over the brachial artery. Next, you will pump up the blood pressure cuff to 30mmHg over the normal range of 120mmHg. Approximately 160mmHg. Finally, you will slowly release the air out of the cuff and listen for the first knocking sound (systolic) and the last knocking sound (diastolic). For a measurement of approximately 120/80



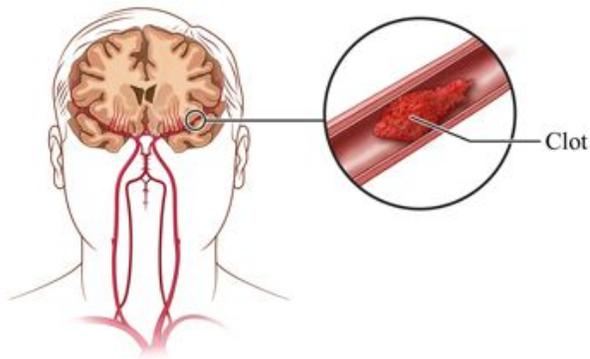
mmHg, depending on the patient's health. Without a medical background the specifics of blood pressure may be overwhelming but with the

proper training it can be easily accomplished.

Now that you know how to obtain a blood pressure we can discuss how a provider might use this information to understand other health conditions and risk factors that might be present. As discussed before, hypertension is something a provider would monitor close to make sure the patient isn't at risk for any life threatening medical events. When taking a blood pressure and a patient has anything over 180/120 they need immediate attention (Easy Auscultation, 1). They could be in immediate danger of a heart attack or stroke.



A heart attack can be caused by hypertension because the ongoing high blood pressure causes an excess strain on the heart and will begin to narrow the arteries eventually causing a heart attack (Heart, 1). Furthermore, hypertension can cause a stroke by damaging blood vessels and producing blood clots that can travel to the brain leading to a stroke (Mayo Clinic, 1).



© 2017 Healthwise [Blood Clot located in the Brain]

Even after completing a medical assisting program, obtaining a blood pressure is still one of the first things you perform when seeing a patient. Being prepared with all of your equipment, accurately performing the skill, and being educated on why you are performing the skill are essential for any task. Even if some people think that blood pressure is nothing to worry about or easy to do, it's important to do it correctly, and confidently. Having confidence in your skills and being educated on the meaning behind your skills is a critical portion of healthcare. If you can master straight forward, noninvasive skills such as taking blood pressure you will eventually be able to perform many more skills in the future.

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