Hypertension

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DEFINITION

Hypertension is the medical name for high blood pressure.

DESCRIPTION

The circulatory system is the network of organs and blood vessels through which blood travels in the body. Blood is pumped out of the heart into blood vessels known as arteries. After passing through the body, blood returns to the heart by way of blood vessels known as veins.

As blood flows through arteries and veins, it pushes on their walls. Blood pressure is defined as the force exerted by blood inside arteries.

Blood does not flow steadily through the circulatory system. At one moment, the heart muscle squeezes blood out of the heart into the arteries. At this point, the blood pressure is high because of the force exerted by the heart. At the next moment, the heart muscle relaxes to let fresh blood into the heart. At this point, the blood pressure is lower because of reduced force by the heart muscle.

The two stages of high and low blood pressure have special names. The highest pressure reached by blood in the arteries is called the systolic pressure. The lowest pressure reached by blood in the arteries is known as the diastolic pressure.

Hypertension is a serious problem because people with the condition have a higher risk for heart disease and other medical problems than people with normal blood pressure. If left untreated, hypertension can lead to a number of medical conditions, including:

- Arteriosclerosis
- Heart attack (see heart attack entry)
- Stroke (see stroke entry)
- Enlarged heart
- Kidney damage

Arteriosclerosis is also called hardening of the arteries. The arteries are normally flexible. They expand and contract to adjust to the flow of blood through them. High blood pressure can cause artery walls to become thick and tough. The arteries themselves may become narrower. Blood cannot flow as easily through them.

When that happens, certain substances in the blood can begin to build up inside the arteries. These substances make the openings even narrower. Eventually, an artery may close completely. When that happens, blood can no longer flow through the circulatory system. A blocked artery can result in a heart attack or a stroke.

Hypertension can also damage the heart itself because the heart has to work harder to push blood through the circulatory system. It grows larger to keep up with this job. If the heart becomes too large, it may no longer be able to pump enough blood through the body. The heart may fail.

Kidneys can also be damaged by hypertension. The kidneys filter waste products from the blood. If blood vessels to the kidneys become clogged, fewer wastes are removed from the blood. The kidneys may fail and wastes may build up in the blood. About 25 percent of the people who are treated for failed kidneys have hypertension.

CAUSES

High blood pressure can be caused by certain events in a person's life. For example, strenuous physical activity or stress can cause blood pressure to rise. However, high blood pressure is usually temporary in such cases. When the activity ceases or the stress goes away, the blood pressure returns to normal. This form of high blood pressure is not regarded as a form of hypertension.

True hypertension exists only when a person has high blood pressure readings on a number of different occasions. If a doctor suspects hypertension, he or she will take a number of blood pressure readings over a period of weeks. If those readings are consistently high, the patient may have hypertension.

The cause of hypertension in 90 to 95 percent of all cases is not known. One important factor may be heredity. People who have family members with hypertension are more likely to develop the condition than people whose family members have no hypertension. Hypertension with no known cause is called primary hypertension.

Hypertension can also be caused by a variety of medical conditions. For example, people with kidney disorders may develop hypertension. The kidneys regulate the balance of water and salt in the body. If the kidneys do not function normally, the amount of salt and water in the body may increase. This increase can cause high blood pressure.

Other conditions that can cause hypertension include blood vessel diseases, disorders of the thyroid or other glands, alcoholism (see alcoholism entry), pregnancy, and the use of certain prescription drugs. Hypertension caused by some other medical problem is known as secondary hypertension.

Certain factors are known to increase a person's risk for hypertension. These factors include:

- Age over sixty
- Male sex
- Heredity
- Sensitivity to table salt
- Obesity (see obesity entry)
- Inactive lifestyle

- Heavy alcohol consumption
- Use of oral contraceptives (birth control pills)

SYMPTOMS

Hypertension is a major health problem, especially because it has no symptoms. Many people have hypertension without knowing it. In the United States, about fifty million people age six and older have high blood pressure. Hypertension is more common in men than women and in people over the age of sixty-five than in younger persons.

DIAGNOSIS

Because hypertension does not produce symptoms it is important to have regular checkups. Taking a person's blood pressure is simple and painless. A doctor or nurse uses an instrument called a sphygmomanometer. A sphygmomanometer (pronounced SFIG-moh-muh-nahm-et-er) consists of a cloth-covered rubber cuff and a pressure valve. The cuff is wrapped around the patient's arm, and air is pumped into the cuff. As the air is slowly released, the doctor or nurse listens through a stethoscope to the sound of the blood rushing through the artery. He or she reads the pressure at which he or she hears distinctive heart sounds (the "lubb" and "dubb" made when a heart beats). These readings provide the patient's systolic and diastolic blood pressures.

MEASURING BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood exerts pressure. That fact was first discovered by the English physician William Harvey (1578–1657) in the 1600s.

No one actually tried to measure blood pressure, however, until nearly a century later. Then, the English clergyman and physiologist Stephen Hales devised the first blood pressure measuring device. He cut open the blood vessel in various animals and inserted a metal pipe into the vessel. He then connected the pipe to a long glass tube. Blood was pushed out of the vessel into the glass tube. The blood rose to different levels in the tube for different animals.

It took another century for physicians to find a way to take blood pressure without actually cutting into a blood vessel. In 1876, the German physician Samuel Siegried von Basch (1837–1905) invented the first sphygmo-manometer (pronounced SFIG-moh-muh-nahmet-er). That tongue-twisting name describes the type of blood pressure measuring device used today. It consists of a rubber tube placed around the patient's upper arm. Air is pumped into the tube. Pressure from the air briefly cuts off the flow of blood in the patient's arm.

As the air is released from the tube, the medical worker listens to the patient's arm through a stethoscope. As blood starts flowing in the arm again, the sound produced by systolic pressure can be heard. A few moments later, the sound produced by the diastolic pressure can be heard. The worker notes the amount of pressure observed in a gauge on the arm band at each sound. These two pressures make up the patient's blood pressure reading.

There is no single point at which a person is said to have hypertension. Instead, certain levels of the condition are set depending on the person's blood pressure. These levels are as follows:

- Normal blood pressure: In the range 130/85
- High normal: In the ranges 130–140/85–90
- Mild hypertension: In the ranges 140–160/90–100
- Moderate hypertension: In the ranges 160–180/100–110
- Severe hypertension: In the ranges 180–210/110–120

- Very severe hypertension: Higher than 210/120

Patients with higher-than-normal blood pressure may then be given other tests. These include:

- Medical and family histories. These help a doctor find out if the patient has risk factors in his or her family. If hypertension is common in the family, the patient is likely to be at higher risk for the condition.

- Physical examination. Sometimes other health problems may be discovered during a physical examination that explain the patient's high blood pressure.

- Examination of the blood vessels in the eyes. High blood pressure may cause blood vessels in the eyes to become thick or narrow. Bleeding in the eyes may also be visible.

- Chest X ray. This is used to check for an enlarged heart, other heart disorders, and lung disease.

- Electrocardiograph (ECG). This test measures the electrical activity of the heart. It can determine whether the heart muscle is functioning normally.

- Blood and urine tests. These help determine the general health of the patient.

TREATMENT

There is no cure for primary hypertension, but blood pressure can almost always be reduced with the correct treatment. The goal of this treatment is to prevent the complications of hypertension.

In cases of secondary hypertension, one approach is to treat the medical condition that causes hypertension. Efforts may be made at the same time to reduce the patient's blood pressure.

A program designed to reduce blood pressure usually has three parts: changes in diet, a plan of regular exercise, and antihypertensive medications. Some changes in lifestyle that can reduce blood pressure include the following:

- Reducing salt intake

- Reducing fat intake

- Losing weight

- Getting regular exercise

- Quitting smoking

- Reducing alcohol consumption

- Learning how to manage stress

For patients with mild or moderate hypertension, these steps may be enough to bring their blood pressure into the normal or high normal range. For patients with more serious hypertension, medications may be prescribed. A variety of medications are available for the treatment of hypertension. They fall into the following categories:

- Diuretics help the kidneys eliminate excess salt and water. The loss of fluid from the kidneys causes arteries to expand and blood pressure to become lower.

- Beta-blockers cause the heart to beat more slowly and with less force.

- Calcium channel blockers help relax muscle cells, reducing the force with which they pump blood.

- Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors are chemicals that prevent blood vessels from tightening up. As a result, the pressure exerted by blood in the blood vessels is reduced.

- Alpha-blockers act on the nervous system, causing arteries to expand and reduce the pressure exerted by the heart on blood flow.

- Vasodilators are chemicals that act directly on arteries, causing them to relax (dilate) so that blood can move more easily through them.

- Nervous system antagonists and agonists act on the nerves that control the size of arteries. They cause arteries to open and allow blood to flow through them more easily.

PROGNOSIS

Generally there is no cure for hypertension, but it can be controlled by changes in one's lifestyle and the use of medications. The major goal of treatment is to avoid the most serious complications of hypertension, such as heart disease and strokes. But Homoeopathic Medicines can completely cure the hypertension if prescribed on the basis of similimum.

PREVENTION

Some risk factors of hypertension cannot be eliminated. For example, a person may inherit a tendency for the disorder. But many risk factors can be prevented or reduced. Some of the most important changes a person can make in his or her life to prevent hypertension include the following:

- Reduce salt intake.

- Reduce fat intake.

- Lose weight.

- Get regular exercise.

- Quit smoking.

- Reduce alcohol consumption.

- Learn how to manage stress.

Homoeopathic Therapeutics-

Aconitum napellus
-Great distress in heart and chest.
-Dreadful oppression of the precordial region.
-Inward pressing in the region of the heart.
-Palpitation with great anxiety and difficulty of breathing. Anguish with dyspnoea.
-Sensation of something rushing into head, with confusion and flying heat in face.
-Sudden attacks of pain in heart, with dyspnoea.
-Aconite is ANXIOUS; restless; with fears : Fear of death.
-Sudden acute conditions from chill, shock, fright.
-All ailments and fears worse at night.

-"Sits up straight and can hardly breathe. Aconite has such a violent cardiac irritation, pulse fluttering, weak, full and bounding; sits up in bed, grasps the throat, wants everything thrown off; before midnight a hot skin, great thirst, great fear - everything is associated together ....
-Sudden attacks of pain in the heart with dyspnoea... breaks into a profuse sweat ... awful anxiety". - Kent.

Apis mellifica

-"The lancinating, darting pains, palpitation, orthopnoea, have rendered Apis invaluable in cardiac inflammations and dropsy".
-Sudden oedema, dyspnoea, and sudden lancinating or STINGING pains, restlessness and anxiety.
-Think of Apis for burning and stinging pains - anywhere.
-Apis is generally thirstless.
-Is worse after sleep : from warm room, and heat : better cold air, cold room, cold applications. (Reverse of Ars.).
-"Skin alternately dry and hot, or perspiring".

Arnica montana

-Pain in region of heart, as if it were squeezed together (Cact., Lil. tigr.), or had shock or blow.
-Heart first rapid, then extremely slow.
-Stitches in cardiac region : stitches left to right.
-Pulse feeble - hurried - irregular.
-Horror of instant death with cardiac distress in the night.
-One of our greatest remedies for tired heart : dilated after strain or exertion.
-Tired out from physical or mental strain.
-Feels bruised, beaten, sore : bruises easily.
-Restless because bed feels too hard.
-Does not wish to be touched : fears approach.

Arsenicum album

-Useful in advanced and desperate heart cases.
-Palpitation, with anguish; cannot lie on back : worse going up stairs; walking. Heartbeats irritable.
-Palpitation and tremulous weakness after stool.
-Angina pectoris; sudden tightness above the heart; agonizing precordial pain; pains extend into neck and occiput; (Latrodect. and Kalm. to left arm and hand); breathing difficult; fainting spells. Least motion makes him lose his breath; sits bent forward, or with head thrown back.
-Worse at night, especially 1 to 5 a.m.
-Rheumatism affecting heart, with great prostration, cold, sticky sweat; great anxiety and oppression; burning about the heart.
-Pulse small, rapid, feeble : intermittent.
-Valvular disease, with dyspnoea, anasarca.
-Hydropericardium with great irritability, anguish and restlessness.
-N.B. - The cardinal symptoms of Ars. are generally present : extreme restlessness, driving out of bed, or from bed to bed.
-Thirst for small quantities, often. Aggravation from cold : relief from heat. (Reverse of Apis. But one has seen Ars. rapidly curative in a desperate case of hydropericardium, where these were absent.

Aurum metallicum

-Frequent attacks of anguish about the heart, and tremulous fearfulness.
-Violent palpitation of the heart.
-Rheumatism that has gone to heart (Kalm.).
-Acute rheumatism with desperate heart conditions; extreme dyspnoea; impossible to lie down.
-A queer symptom - heart seems to shake, as if loose, when walking.
-The Aurum mental state is profound despondency and melancholy.
-Disgust of life. Tendency to suicide.
-Absolute loss of enjoyment in everything.

-Pains wander from joint to joint and finally settle in the heart.
Aurum muriaticum
-Is also very valuable in heart troubles.
-Hering (Guiding Symptoms) says, "Angina pectoris (next to Arnica indispensable)".
-Heaviness, aching, sensation of rigidity in heart. Cardiac anguish.
-Sticking in heart.
Cactus grandiflorus
-Palpitation of the heart : heart squeezed.
-Sensation of constriction in the heart, as if an iron band prevented its normal movement.
-Several violent, irregular beats of the heart, with sensation of pressure and heaviness.
-Small, irregular heart-beats, with necessity for deep inspiration.
-Congestion in chest.
-Painful constriction lower chest; "a cord tightly bound round false ribs, obstructing breathing".
-Great constriction (sternum) "compressed by iron pincers".
-"It is the nature of Cactus to constrict.
-Tightness and constriction about head - chest - diaphragm - heart - uterus : - clutchings.
-Chest as if filled with hot gushes of blood.
-"Cactus has a profound curative action upon the heart".
-Fear and distress. Violent suffering.
-Screaming with the pain.
-Strong pulsations felt in strange places - stomach - bowels - even extremities.
-"11 o'clock remedy : 11 a.m. and 11 p.m. "
Crataegus oxyacantha
-"Weak heart muscles".
-Pulse irregular, feeble, intermittent.
-"Must be used for some time to obtain good results". -Boericke.
Digitalis purpurea
-Sensation as though heart stood still, with great anxiety : must hold breath, dare not move.
-Pulse very slow: thready, slow, intermittent.
-Sensation as if heart would stop beating if she moved. (Gels. must move or it will stop.).
-Respiration difficult : sighing : stops when she drops off to sleep.
-Digitalis affects heart and liver : jaundice - white stools, with very slow pulse. (Kalm.).
-Diarrhoea and nausea with heart disease.
Kalium carbonicum
-Stitching pains - chest - heart, extort cries.
-Stitches about heart and through to scapula.
-Heart's action, intermittent, irregular, tumultuous, weak. Mitral insufficiency.
-Leans forward resting on arms to take weight off chest (rev. Spig.).
-Stitching pains (like Bry.), but also independently of motion and respiration (unlike Bry.).
-Worse hours are 2-4 a.m.
-Has profuse sweat. Puffiness about the eyes.
-Complementary to Carbo veg.
-One has seen Kali carb. following a few doses of Carbo veg., bring back to life a dying child, an old mitral case, with pericarditis with effusion, and pneumonia with plural effusion
Kalmia latifolia
-Violent palpitations of the heart with faint feelings : with oppressed breathing.
-Wandering rheumatic pains in region of heart, extend down left arm.
-(Lat. mact., Med.).
-Heart disease, after frequent attacks of rheumatism, or alternating with it.

-Hypertrophy and valvular insufficiency, or thickening after rheumatism; paroxysms of anguish about heart, with dyspnoea and febrile excitement.
-Remarkable slowness of pulse (Dig.). Pulse very feeble : or, heart's action very tumultuous, rapid and visible (Spig.).
-"When rheumatism has been treated externally and cardiac symptoms ensue". - Kent.

Lachesis mutus

-Cramp-like pain in precordial region, causing palpitation with anxiety.
-"Heart feels too large for containing cavity".
-Bluish lips. Cyanosis. (Spongia.).
-Intolerance of touch or pressure on throat - larynx - stomach abdomen.
-As if something swollen in pit of throat would suffocate him.
-Worse after sleep. (Spongia).
-"Lachesis is one of our most useful remedies in heart troubles, acute or chronic; the peculiar suffocation, cough, and aggravation from constriction being the guiding symptoms". - Nash.

Latrodectus mactans

-Violent precordial pains extending to axilla and down left arm and forearm to fingers, with numbness and apnoea. Angina.
-Violent precordial pains and pain left arm, which was almost paralysed.
-Pulse uncountable : quick and thready.

Lilium tigrinum

-Dull oppressive pain in heart; sharp quick pain, with fluttering.
-Roused from sleep by pain as if heart were violently grasped, the grasp gradually relaxed, interrupting heartbeat and breathing.
-Sensation as if heart was grasped or squeezed in a vice (Cactus); as if all blood had gone to heart : must bend double; (reverse of Spig.).
-Heart alternately grasped and released.
-Heart feels over-loaded with blood.
-Violent palpitation with throbbing of carotids.
-Depression of spirits. Weeps.
-Characteristics : Hurried feeling, as of imperative duties and inability to perform them.
-Pressure on rectum and bladder. Terrible urging to stool, to urinate, all the time.
-Bearing down with heavy weight, as if whole contents of pelvis would issue through vagina, but for upward pressure of hand.

Lycopus virginicus

-Protrusion of eyes, with tumultuous action of heart. (Spig.).
-Eyes feel full and heavy; pressing outwards.
-Cardiac irritability. Pulse frequent, small, compressible : or quick hard, wiry, not compressible.
-Trembling hands.

Naja tripudians

-A great heart medicine, only proved in low potencies, so we lack the finer indications.
-Heart weak. Post-diphtheritic heart.
-"For a heart damaged by Acute rheumatism".

Phosphorus

-Palpitation, violent, on slightest motion.
-Violent, lying on left side.
-Precordial anguish from emotion.
-Heaviness, chest, as if a weight lying on it.
-Constriction : pressing sensation about heart.
-Burning pain between scapulae. (Lyc.).

-The Phos. type : tall, fine : fear alone, dark, thunder. Thirst for cold drinks.

Pulsatilla pratensis

-Rheumatic irritation of heart, where pains shift rapidly about the body.

-Heart symptoms reflex from indigestion.

-Heaviness, pressure, fullness (heart). Violent palpitation with anguish : sight obscured.

-Patient nervous, weepy, intolerant of heat : craves air and fuss.

Sepia officinalis

-Violent palpitation of the heart and beating of all the arteries, in bed. Stitches in heart.

-Violent palpitations of heart, as if it would force its way through chest wall : relieved by walking a long distance, and walking very fast.

-The Sepia patient is indifferent : hates fuss.

-Tendency to ptosis and dragging down, especially in pelvic organs.

-(Lil. tigr.).

-Profuse perspirations, especially axillae.

-General relief from motion - food - sleep.

Spigelia anthelmia

-VIOLENT beating of heart that frequently he could hear the pulsation, or that the beasts could be seen through the clothes.

-Palpitation aggravated by sitting down and bending forward (rev. of Kali carb.).

-Heart seemed to be in tremulous motion.

-Worse for deep inspiration, or holding breath.

-"Heart sounds may be audible several inches away". - Nash.

-Must lie on right side, or with head very high.

-Spigelia's pains are stitching. Sharp neuralgic pains (chest, head, heart, eyes, etc.).

-Worse for slightest motion.

Spongia tosta

-Constricting pain (cardiac) with anxiety.

-Attacks of oppression and cardiac pain agg. lying with head low. Anxious sweat.

-Palpitation : violent, with pain, gasping respiration : suddenly awakened after midnight with suffocation, great alarm, anxiety.

-Awoke often in a fright, felt suffocating (Lach.). Lips blue (Lach.).

-Angina pectoris : contracting pain in chest, heat, suffocation, faintness, anxious sweat.

Sulphur

-Anxious palpitation. Violent palpitation.

-Rush of blood to heart. "Too much blood in heart". (Cact.).

-Heart feels enlarged.

-Great orgasm of blood, with burning hands.

-Stitches heart and chest; worse deep breathing.

-Sulphur is hungry - untidy - argumentative.

-Worse heat : intolerant of clothing : fond of fat.

Dd nosodes

-In cases that do not respond normally to treatment one must not forget the Nosodes. One of Hahnemann's "chronic parasitic diseases" may be the bar to progress in acute sickness also - and that not only with tubercle, syphilis and gonorrhoea, but also in regard to Scarlet fever, Diphtheria, Small-pox, Measles and all the rest. Therefore, one should remember: -

Diphtherinum

-With history of Diphtheria.

-Feeble, irregular or intermittent pulse, quick or slow, with vomiting and cyanosis.

Syphilinum

-Pain and pressure behind the sternum.
-Lancinating pains in heart at night, base to apex (Medorrh. is worse by day).
Medorrhinum
-Heart felt very hot : beat fast : with bursting sensation : or feeling of a cavity where heart ought to be.
-Sharp pain at apex, worse motion.
-Great pain, heart, extending to left arm (Latro. mact.) and throat.
-Intense pain, heart, radiates to all parts of left chest : worse least movement.
-The troubles of Medorrh. are worse by day - sunrise to sunset.
-Those of Luet. by night : sunset to sunrise.
-Medorrh. is rich in mental symptoms : Everything seems unreal like a dream.
-Time moves so slowly : things done an hour ago, as if done a week ago.
-(Cann. ind.).
-Anguish : introspection : always anticipating evil happenings.
-"Someone behind her".
-Cannot concentrate : forgets what she is reading; cannot spell simple words.
Dd bac., tub.
-Heart cases where there is a family, or past history of tubercular manifestations.
-Palpitation : heaviness : pressure over heart.
-Irritable : irritable on waking : nothing pleases : nothing satisfies.
-"Wants to travel : cosmopolitan condition of mind". Suffocates in a warm room. (Puls.).