



Service Members' Glossary of Common Blood Pressure Terms



Angina: Chest pain or discomfort that occurs when the heart does not get enough blood. Angina may feel like pressure or a squeezing pain in your chest. The pain may also occur in your shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, or back. It may also feel like indigestion.

Source: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Angina/Angina_WhatIs.html

Aorta: The large artery that receives blood from the heart's left ventricle and distributes it to the body.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3038158>

Arteriosclerosis: Commonly called hardening of the arteries, this includes a variety of conditions that cause artery walls to thicken and lose elasticity. Arteriosclerosis can occur because of fatty deposits on the inner lining of arteries (atherosclerosis), calcium deposits in the wall of the arteries, or thickening of the muscular wall of the arteries from **long-term high blood pressure**. It also is associated with aging.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3038158>

Arteries (Artery): The main blood vessels that carry oxygen from the heart to the various parts of the body. Their thick elastic walls expand as blood is pumped out by the heart and contract to help push it along through the arteries.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3038158>

Artery: See **Arteries** above.

Blood: fluid in the body made up of plasma, red and white blood cells, and platelets. Blood carries oxygen and nutrients to and waste materials away from all body tissues.

Source: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/glossary/>

Blood Pressure: The force or pressure exerted by the beating of the heart against the walls of the arteries.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3038158>

Body Mass Index (BMI)*: A number calculated from a person's weight and height. BMI provides an estimate of body fatness and is used to screen for weight categories that may lead to health problems.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/>

* For some very muscular people BMI is not an accurate measure of body fat.

Cardiovascular Disease: Disease of the heart and blood vessels.

Source: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/glossary/>

Chronic: Long lasting condition.

Source: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/glossary/>

Congenital Heart Disease: Abnormal development of the heart that occurs before birth.

Source: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/glossary/>

Coronary Artery Disease: Coronary artery disease (CAD) occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle (the coronary arteries) become hardened and narrowed. The arteries harden and narrow due to buildup of a material called plaque (plak) on their inner walls. The buildup of plaque is known as atherosclerosis (ATH-er-o-skler-O-sis). As the plaque increases in size, the insides of the coronary arteries get narrower and less blood can flow through them.

Source: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Cad/CAD_WhatIs.html.

DASH Diet: DASH stands for “Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension.” The DASH eating plan includes whole grains, poultry, fish, and nuts and has reduced amounts of fats, red meats, sweets, and sugared beverages.

Source: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/h_eating/h_eating.htm

Diastolic Blood Pressure: The pressure when the heart rests between beats. It is shown as the bottom number in a blood pressure reading.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/about.htm>

Gestational Hypertension (Pregnancy-Induced Hypertension): The development of high blood pressure in pregnancy. High Blood pressure can harm the mother’s kidneys and other organs, and can cause low birth weight and early delivery. In the most serious cases, the mother develops preeclampsia (see definition below), which can threaten the life of mother and fetus.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/about.htm>

Heart Disease: A number of abnormal conditions affecting the heart and the blood vessels in the heart. The most common type of heart disease is [coronary artery disease](#), which is the gradual buildup of [plaques](#) in the coronary [arteries](#), the blood vessels that bring blood to the heart. This disease develops slowly and silently, over decades. It can go virtually unnoticed until it produces a heart attack.

Source: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/glossary/>

Heart Attack (Myocardial Infarction): Occurs when a blood clot develops at the site of plaque in a coronary artery and suddenly cuts off most or all blood supply to that part of the heart muscle. Cells in the heart muscle begin to die if they do not receive enough oxygen-rich blood. This can cause permanent damage to the heart muscle.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4578>

Heart Failure: The inability of the heart to pump enough blood out to the body.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=343>

Healthy Weight: For **adults**, a healthy weight is defined as the appropriate weight in relation to height. As people gain weight, their risks for high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, and heart disease all increase.

Source: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/learn-it/bmi-chart.htm>

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/learn-it/healthy.htm>

High Blood Pressure: A blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher is considered high blood pressure.

Source: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Hbp/HBP_WhatIs.html

Hypertension (high blood pressure): Blood pressure that consistently stays too high for too long-

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/about.htm>

Hypotension: Hypotension is abnormally low blood pressure, (blood pressure that is lower than 90/60 mmHg). Hypotension is a medical concern only if it causes signs and/or symptoms such as dizziness, fainting, or, in extreme cases, [shock](#).

Source: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/hyp/hyp_whatIs.html

Isolated Systolic Hypertension (ISH): A systolic blood pressure (SBP) of 160 mm Hg or higher with a diastolic blood pressure (DBP) of less than 90 mm Hg.

Source: <http://hyper.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/full/hypertensionaha;38/6/1372>

Normal Blood Pressure: A blood pressure reading below 120/80 (but above 89/59) is considered normal. Very low blood pressure can sometimes be cause for concern and needs to be checked by a doctor.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3034848>

Obesity: Obesity is having a high amount of extra body fat, with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or greater*. The more body fat that you carry around and the more you weigh, the more likely you are to develop [heart disease](#), [high blood pressure](#), type 2 diabetes, gallstones, breathing problems, and certain cancers.

Source: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/obe/obe_whatare.html and <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/defining.htm>

* For some very muscular people BMI is not an accurate measure of body fat.

Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD): A type of peripheral vascular disease (see below) that is similar to coronary artery disease and carotid artery disease. In PAD, fatty deposits build up in the inner linings of the artery walls. These blockages restrict blood circulation, mainly in arteries leading to the kidneys, stomach, arms, legs and feet.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4692>

Peripheral Vascular Disease: This refers to diseases of blood vessels outside the heart and brain. It's often a narrowing of vessels that carry blood to the legs, arms, stomach or kidneys. They're usually short-term effects related to "spasm" that may come and go. Raynaud's disease is an example.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4692>

Plaque: A buildup of fat, [cholesterol](#) and other substances in the walls of the [arteries](#).

Source: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/glossary/>

Preeclampsia: A disorder that occurs only during pregnancy and the postpartum period. It's characterized by high blood pressure and elevated protein in the urine (as a result of kidney problems). Preeclampsia typically begins after the 20th week of pregnancy.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3028465>

Pre-hypertension: Blood pressure that stays between 120–139/80–89 is considered pre-hypertension.

Source: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=468>

Raynaud's Syndrome: This is a condition in which the smallest arteries that bring blood to the fingers or toes constrict (go into spasm) when exposed to cold or from an emotional upset. Smoking cigarettes or working with vibrating machinery also can cause these episodes.

Sodium: A mineral that is used in regulating the amount of water in the body. Sodium also plays important roles, along with [potassium](#), in muscle contraction, the beating of the heart, and the sending of nerve impulses. Sodium is an ingredient of table salt, and is frequently high in processed and convenience foods such as luncheon meats and microwave dinners. For someone with high blood pressure, the doctor may advise eating less salt and sodium (1,500 mg per day).

Source: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/glossary/>

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/sodium/sodium.htm>

Sphygmomanometer: The most accurate instrument used along with a stethoscope to measure blood pressure, also referred to as a blood pressure cuff.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/about.htm>

Stroke: A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that brings oxygen and nutrients to the brain bursts or is clogged by a blood clot or some other mass. Deprived of oxygen, nerve cells in the affected area of the brain can't work and die within minutes. The devastating effects of a severe stroke are often permanent because dead brain cells aren't replaced.

Signs that you may be having a stroke include:

- ✓ Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- ✓ Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- ✓ Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- ✓ Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination

- ✓ Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you experience symptoms!

Source: <http://www.strokeassociation.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4755>
<http://www.strokeassociation.com/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1020>

Systolic Blood Pressure: Systolic pressure is the force of blood in the arteries as the heart beats. It is shown as the top number in a blood pressure reading.

Source: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/hbp/whathbp.htm>

Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA): A transient ischemic attack (TIA) is a transient stroke that lasts only a few minutes. It occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is briefly interrupted. TIA symptoms, which usually occur suddenly, are similar to those of stroke but do not last as long. Most symptoms of a TIA disappear within an hour, although they may persist for up to 24 hours... TIAs are often warning signs that a person is at risk for a more serious and debilitating stroke. About one-third of those who have a TIA will have an acute stroke some time in the future.

Source: <http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/tia/tia.htm>

Reviewers

MG Patrick D. Sculley, DDS, MA, Consultant and Subject Matter Expert , WinMil, LLC

Judith S. Harris, CHES, BSN, MA, Certified Health Educator, Consultant and Subject Matter Expert, WinMil, LLC

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