Hypertension means having high blood pressure. Having hypertension can lead to other diseases or conditions which can be dangerous. They can be prevented if the hypertension is treated. You might think that high blood pressure just affects adults, but babies, children, and teens can have it too. While hypertension is more common among adults, the rate among children is on the rise, a trend that experts link to the increase in childhood obesity.

Symptoms of hypertension

While high blood pressure doesn't always cause symptoms, it still affects the body and puts a person at risk for long-term health problems. In rare cases, severe hypertension can cause changes in vision, dizziness, heart palpitations, nosebleeds, headaches and nausea.

Many children and teens with high blood pressure have no other health problems but do have a family history of hypertension and an unhealthy lifestyle, a bad diet, excess weight, stress and too little physical activity.

If it is not treated, high blood pressure can damage the heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes. But when hypertension is caught early, monitored, and treated, children can lead an active, normal life.
Myths can kill, but the truth will set you free and empower you with options.

1. **MYTH:** I feel fine. Therefore I do not have to worry about hypertension.
   **TRUTH:** Many people do not experience any symptoms. High blood pressure is a serious condition and can lead to severe health problems if it is not treated. High blood pressure is also the No. 1 cause of stroke.

2. **MYTH:** High blood pressure is an old age disease
   **TRUTH:** Hypertension is not just an old age problem. More and more young people suffer from high blood pressure. With age blood vessels can weaken and hence the chances of getting high blood pressure increase as you grow older. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), high blood pressure affects every third person above the age of 18. The proportion increases with age, from 1 in 10 people in their 20s and 30s to 5 in 10 people in their 50s.

3. **MYTH:** High blood pressure can be cured with medication
   **TRUTH:** Hypertension can be managed but not cured. It can be a lifelong disease. You will need to make dietary and lifestyle changes, and may need medication every day for the rest of your life.

**Measuring Blood Pressure**

Doctors measure blood pressure with an instrument which has a cuff that’s wrapped around the upper arm and pumped up to create pressure. When the cuff is inflated, it compresses a large artery in the arm, stopping the blood flow for a moment. Blood pressure is measured as air is gradually let out of the cuff, which allows blood to flow through the artery again.

The doctor or nurse will also put a stethoscope over an artery to hear the first pulse as the blood flows through — this is the **systolic pressure** (or the pressure at the peak of each heartbeat). The **diastolic pressure** (the pressure when the heart is resting between beats) is noted when the sounds disappear. When a blood pressure reading is taken, the higher number represents the systolic pressure and the lower number represents the diastolic pressure. For example: 120/80 (120 over 80) in an adult means that the systolic pressure is 120 and the diastolic pressure is 80, perfect for an adult person.

As children grow, their blood pressure increases from a systolic pressure of about 70-90 in an infant to adult values in a teenager. Among young children, the "normal" range will depend on sex, age, and height; your doctor will be able to compare your child’s blood pressure with national norms.