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## High Blood Pressure

### What Is High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure is also known as hypertension. Blood pressure refers to the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as your heart pumps out blood. Hypertension occurs when your blood pressure rises and stays above normal over a period of time.

Hypertension is often related to atherosclerosis, which is the buildup of plaque in blood vessels. This condition leads to decreased circulation and peripheral arterial disease (PAD). People with decreased circulation in their legs and feet may develop ulcerations (open wounds on the skin) that can lead to amputations.

As a member of the health-care team, your podiatrist is vitally concerned about hypertension and vascular disease (heart and circulatory problems). Make sure you tell your podiatrist if you have high blood pressure and any medications that you may be taking for treatment.

### Symptoms

Symptoms of poor circulation in the feet and legs may include:

- Cramping in the feet and legs, particularly with exercise
- Sores on the feet or legs that do not heal or take a long time to heal
- Changes in color to the feet
- Changes in temperature to the feet
- Loss of hair on the feet and legs

Uncontrolled hypertension can also lead to heart disease, which may present as swelling in your feet and legs.

### When to Visit a Podiatrist

If you experience any of the above symptoms, it is important to visit a podiatrist. And if you have been diagnosed with hypertension, it is important to tell your podiatrist, because medications that may be prescribed for a foot or ankle condition could interact with your blood pressure medications. Also, if you need to have foot or ankle surgery, it is important that your blood pressure is under control prior to any surgical procedures.

### Diagnosis and Treatment

As part of your visit, your podiatrist may check your vital signs—height, weight, and blood pressure. Your podiatrist will conduct a careful examination to determine if there is lower than normal temperature in any of the extremities, absence of normal skin color, or diminished pulse in the feet. Your podiatrist will also ask you about increased or periodic swelling in the lower extremities.

If any abnormalities in your blood pressure are noted, your podiatrist will notify you and may refer you to your primary care physician for further evaluation and treatment.