

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Children at risk

You may need to worry about high blood pressure, but your kids don't, right? Not so. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, about 5 out of every 100 kids have higher-than-normal blood pressure. And, if it's not treated, the condition can put a child at risk for serious health problems or future heart disease.

Who is at risk Often high blood pressure in children develops because of another medical problem, such as heart or kidney disease. But pressure usually goes down when that condition is treated.

Some medicines also can cause blood pressure to rise. However, it usually returns to normal when the child stops using that medicine.

And children who are overweight usually have higher blood pressure than those who aren't overweight. In these cases, a special diet and regular exercise can help bring levels down. A doctor also may prescribe blood pressure medicine.

Get checked out Make sure your child gets regular medical checkups. The doctor or nurse will do a blood pressure check at each visit. If there's a problem, your child can begin treatment right away.



Visit the American Academy of Pediatrics website at

aap.org.



Kids' health: Why cholesterol is a serious threat

Cholesterol isn't just a concern for adults. Your child could also face health problems later in life if his or her cholesterol level is high during childhood.

High cholesterol can increase your child's chances of getting heart disease as he or she gets older, according to the American Heart Association.

Routine cholesterol checks are not necessary for all children. But the American Dietetic Association recommends that you have your

child's cholesterol checked if you have a family history of heart disease or high cholesterol or if your child is overweight.

You can help manage your child's cholesterol level by encouraging him or her to make healthy lifestyle choices. High cholesterol can be lowered through weight loss, regular exercise, and changes in what your child eats.

A diet low in cholesterol and saturated fats is the best place to start. Your child should eat plenty of

fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy products, low-fat meats, and whole-grain cereals and breads.

Examples of healthy snacks include: ➤ Pieces of fruit mixed with fat-free yogurt ➤ Carrot and celery sticks ➤ Low-fat pretzels and sunflower seeds ➤ Bagels with low-fat cheese

If you have concerns about your child's cholesterol, talk to the child's doctor.

Additional source: American Academy of Family Physicians

Visit besmartbewell.com and select *Childhood Obesity* for expert information and video stories about children learning to manage their weight.