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from Judee,
Our Parish Nurse ♥

High Blood Pressure continued:

What Are the Signs and Symptoms of High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure (HBP) itself usually has no symptoms. Rarely, headaches may occur.

You can have HBP for years without knowing it. During this time, HBP can damage the heart, blood vessels, kidneys, and other parts of the body.

Some people only learn that they have HBP after the damage has caused problems, such as coronary heart disease, stroke, or kidney failure.

Knowing your blood pressure numbers is important, even when you're feeling fine. If your blood pressure is normal, you can work with your health care team to keep it that way. If your numbers are too high, you can take steps to lower them and control your blood pressure. This helps reduce your risk for complications.

Complications of High Blood Pressure

When blood pressure stays high over time, it can damage the body. HBP can cause:

- The heart to get larger or weaker, which may lead to heart failure. Heart failure is a condition in which the heart can't pump enough blood throughout the body.
- Aneurysms (AN-u-risms) to form in blood vessels. An aneurysm is an abnormal bulge or "ballooning" in the wall of an artery. Common spots for aneurysms are the main artery that carries blood from the heart to the body; the arteries in the brain, legs, and intestines; and the artery leading to the spleen.
- Blood vessels in the kidney to narrow. This may cause kidney failure.
- Arteries throughout the body to narrow in some places, which limits blood flow (especially to the heart, brain, kidneys, and legs). This can cause a heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, or amputation of part of the leg.
- Blood vessels in the eyes to burst or bleed. This may lead to vision changes or blindness.

How Is High Blood Pressure Diagnosed?

Your doctor will diagnose high blood pressure (HBP) using the results of blood pressure tests. These tests will be done several times to make sure the results are correct. If your numbers are high, your doctor may have you return for more tests to check your blood pressure over time.

If your blood pressure is 140/90 mmHg or higher over time, your doctor will likely diagnose you with HBP. If you have diabetes or chronic kidney disease, a blood pressure of 130/80 mmHg or higher is considered HBP.

The HBP ranges in children are different. (For more information, see below.)

How Is Blood Pressure Tested?

A blood pressure test is easy and painless. This test is done at a doctor's office or clinic.

To prepare for the test:

