

Monthly Tip (December 2009):

The Importance of “Prehypertension”.

In the JNC-7 blood pressure classification¹ “prehypertension” is 120-139/80-89. In other classifications this has been termed “high-normal” blood pressure.

Individuals with blood pressures in this range are important because:

(a) Those with diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and cardiovascular disease require antihypertensive drug therapy within this range of blood pressure¹.

(b) “Prehypertension” acknowledges that fact that even in the population at large there is a gradation of cardiovascular risk between “optimal” (< 120/80) blood pressure and stage 1 hypertension ($\geq 140/90$)². It is possible that future clinical trials will mandate that even “low risk” individuals within this range should receive antihypertensive therapy (see my November “Comment”)

(c) Individuals with blood pressure in the “prehypertension” range are at significant risk of progressing to hypertension (20% at 1 year, 40% at 2 years, 60% at 3 years)³ and thus need to be monitored quite closely. Even if antihypertensive medication is not indicated currently, it may well become so within a relatively short space of time

1. JAMA.2003;289:2560-2572 .
2. N.Engl.J.Med.2001;345:1291-1297
3. N.Engl.J.Med.2006;354:1685-97