

Hypertension During Hair Transplantation

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What is the definition?

- A blood pressure greater than 180/120, as per the American College of Cardiology (ACC).

How is it recognized?

- Changes in blood pressure are usually silent
- Establish a baseline blood pressure before and at the conclusion of the procedure.
- Additional measurements can be taken intraoperatively after a defined interval of time or as clinically indicated, such as in the case of excessive bleeding (hypertension) or presyncope (hypotension).
- If systemic anesthetic agents are used, measurements should be taken at regular intervals, depending on the medications and local standards.

Why is hypertension important in hair transplantation?

- It is a marker of pain and anxiety.
- It may increase intraoperative bleeding.
- It is almost never an indication to cancel surgery. The American College of Cardiology recommends cancellation of elective surgery, based on established increased cardiovascular risk, if the systolic blood pressure exceeds 200 mm Hg. However, this same risk cannot be generalized to hair transplantation, which is more akin to a procedure than an operation.
- In the event of hypertension with chest pain or acute neurologic changes, the procedure should be aborted, and the patient assessed in an emergency department. Of note, this would be the correct course of action regardless of the measured blood pressure.

How should intraoperative hypertension be managed?

- Treat pain and anxiety: hypertension is usually a result of untreated pain or anxiety, superimposed on undiagnosed chronic hypertension.
- Rarely, it may be caused using large volume intradermal epinephrine or inadvertent intravascular epinephrine injection, in which cases further use of epinephrine should be limited.
- If hypertension does not respond to the above measures and it is impacting hemostasis, consider a single dose of an oral calcium channel blocker.
- Do not use intravenous blood pressure medications. These require close monitoring and can be associated with a rapid drop in blood pressure.
- Patients should be referred to their family physician for further management.