

Wellness Corner Connection

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The *Silent* Killer



There is a stalker among us preying on millions of Americans who don't even realize they are potential victims. They go about their lives eating whatever they want, maintain a sedentary lifestyle and don't pay too much attention to getting regular check ups. So who is this sneaky assassin? Hypertension, commonly referred to as High Blood Pressure. The disease has few, if any symptoms, therefore, many victims aren't even aware they have a problem until it's too late. If high blood pressure is not controlled, it can have life-altering consequences including stroke, heart attack, heart failure, and kidney disease.

How big a problem is high blood pressure in American and why should you care?

According to the American Heart Association:

- ◆ One out of every three (3) Americans has high blood pressure. This is HUGH!
- ◆ Nearly 20% of adult Americans are living with the disease and don't even know it.
- ◆ Only about half of the more than 76 million Americans diagnosed with high blood pressure are controlling it.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- ◆ Hypertension costs the nation \$47.5 billion annually in direct medical expenses and \$3.5 billion each year in lost productivity.
- ◆ The average population sodium intake is 3,300mg. Reducing it by 1,000mg a day may reduce cases of high blood pressure by 11 million and save \$18 billion in healthcare costs annually!!!

Sodium is an essential mineral that our body's need in order to function properly, between 180mg and 500mg per day. But Americans are consuming far more sodium (Salt) on a daily basis than is necessary or safe. The average sodium intake for adults in America is over 3,400 mg per day, far above the minimal level required and more than double the recommended maximum limit for most people. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that everyone limit sodium intake to below 2,300 mg per day and that everyone should also get at least 4,700 mg of potassium a day to help balance their levels of sodium and potassium in the body. However, according to the Harvard School of Public Health, up to 70 percent of Americans belong to a high-risk group that needs to cut sodium intake even more. These groups include people over 40, African-Americans, people with hypertension or pre-hypertension and people with diabetes. Anyone in these categories should limit sodium intake to 1,500 milligrams per day. Even people who are not in these groups can benefit from limiting sodium intake to 1,500 milligrams a day, and there are no negative health consequences for doing so.

So what can you do? Well you can start by not picking up the salt shaker. Instead, spice up your food in healthier ways, maybe using lemon juice, balsamic vinegar or other spices or using far less or eliminating salt altogether from recipes. But even by doing that you may not be doing enough to lower your risk of high blood pressure especially if you eat a lot of restaurant or processed foods. Up to 75% of the sodium in the average American diet comes from these two sources. Become knowledgeable about sodium. Whether you are in a grocery store or ordering at your favorite restaurant, you can avoid sodium if you know what to look for. Your best ally is the Nutrition Facts Label on every product package. Take a look at the sodium content the next time you pick up a can of soup. Most will have enough sodium to nearly meet the recommended daily intake, and that's for ONE SERVING. Most canned soups have a serving size of two. How many of us only eat half a can? Now look at that label again and this time double it. See what I mean? Look for products with the American Heart Association's Heart-Check Mark on the label. This red and white icon guarantees that the product meets the association's sodium requirement of less than 480 mg per portion. And when eating out, choose restaurants where food is cooked to order. And don't be embarrassed to ask your server about the sodium content of menu items. Specify that you want your dish prepared without salt. Bon appétit!

Spinach

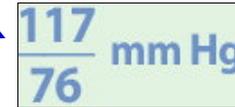
Helps to Lower Blood Pressure

A green leafy delight, **spinach** is low in calories, high in fiber, and packed with heart-healthy nutrients like potassium, folate, and magnesium — key ingredients for lowering and maintaining blood pressure levels. An easy way to eat more of this great green? Try mixing fresh spinach leaves into salads or adding them to sandwiches.



Understanding your BP Readings

Blood pressure (BP) is typically recorded as two numbers, written as a ratio like this:



Read as "117 over 76 millimeters of mercury"

Systolic

The top number, which is also the higher of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats (when the heart muscle contracts).

Diastolic

The bottom number, which is also the lower of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries between heartbeats (when the heart muscle is resting between beats and refilling with blood).

What is the AHA recommendation for healthy blood pressure?

This chart reflects blood pressure categories defined by the American Heart Association

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic mm Hg (upper #)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower #)
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80
Prehypertension	120 – 139	or	80 – 89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	140 – 159	or	90 – 99
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	160 or higher	or	100 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (Emergency care needed)	Higher than 180	or	Higher than 110

How is high blood pressure diagnosed?

Your blood pressure rises with each heartbeat and falls when your heart relaxes between beats. While BP can change from minute to minute with changes in posture, exercise, stress or sleep, **it should normally be less than 120/80 mm Hg (less than 120 systolic AND less than 80 diastolic) for an adult age 20 or over. About one in three (33.5%) U.S. adults has high blood pressure.**

If your blood pressure reading is higher than normal, your doctor may take several readings over time and/or have you monitor your blood pressure at home before diagnosing you with high blood pressure.

A single high reading does not necessarily mean that you have high blood pressure.

However, if readings stay at 140/90 mm Hg or above (systolic 140 or above OR diastolic 90 or above) over time, your doctor will likely want you to begin a treatment program. Such a program almost always includes lifestyle changes and often prescription medication for those with readings of 140/90 or higher.

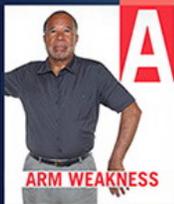
If, while monitoring your blood pressure, you get a systolic reading of 180 mm Hg or higher OR a diastolic reading of 110 mm Hg or higher, wait a couple of minutes and take it again. If the reading is still at or above that level, you should seek immediate emergency medical treatment for a [hypertensive crisis](#). If you can't access the emergency medical services (EMS), have someone drive you to the hospital right away.

Even if your blood pressure is normal, you should consider making lifestyle modifications to prevent the development of HBP and improve your heart health.

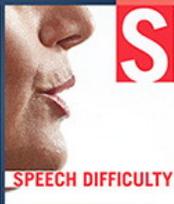
SPOT A STROKE



F
FACE DROOPING



A
ARM WEAKNESS



S
SPEECH DIFFICULTY



T
TIME TO CALL 911

Stroke Warning Signs and Symptoms

THE FACTS

- ◆ A person with high BP is almost 6 times more likely to have a stroke.
- ◆ The combination of uncontrolled high BP and diabetes wreaks havoc on all organ systems.
- ◆ African-Americans are more susceptible to high BP, stroke, heart disease, and kidney disease.

Lifestyle Changes in your Control by MayoClinic

Waistlines @

Risk:

Men > 40 inches

Women >35 inches

What can you do to help treat and even prevent high blood pressure?

There are several lifestyle changes that you can make which will have a tremendous impact on treating and preventing high blood pressure. These changes will come as no surprise to you but they are so important that it's worth repeating. These behaviors may have been with you for awhile so won't be so easy or quick to change. Take small steps and don't focus on all of them at once. Even small changes can have a huge impact on improving your health!

1. **Lose extra pounds and watch your waistline**—blood pressure increases as weight increases. Even losing 10 pounds can help reduce your blood pressure. Consult your doctor on a target weight for you and the best way to achieve it. Also keep an eye on your waistline. Extra weight around your waist can put you at greater risk for high BP.



2. **Regular physical activity**—well this certainly comes as no surprise. Try to get at least 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week. You could lower your BP within a few weeks. If you are new to exercise, start slow...maybe 10 minutes at a time. And don't squeeze in all your exercise on the weekends. That could actually be risky!

3. **Eat a healthy diet.** Keep a food diary, even for a week could really surprise you. And count the BLT's (bites, licks and tastes...they have calories too). Consider boosting potassium. It can lessen the effects of sodium on blood pressure. Talk to your doctor about the level that is best for you.

4. **Reduce sodium** in your diet (as mentioned on page 1 of this issue).

5. **Limit the amount of alcohol** you drink. In small amounts, it can potentially lower your blood pressure by 2 to 4 mm hg. But too much (generally over one drink a day for women and men over 65, or more than two a day for men age 65 and younger) can do just the opposite.



6. **Avoid tobacco products and secondhand smoke.** Nicotine can actually raise your blood pressure 10 mm Hg or more for up to an hour after you smoke. Smoking throughout the day means your blood pressure may remain constantly high.



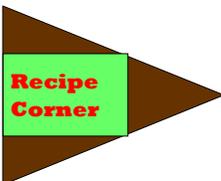
7. **Cut back on caffeine** for obvious reasons. To see if it has an affect on you, check your pressure within 30 minutes of drinking a cup of coffee or other caffeinated beverage. If your blood pressure increases by 5 to 10 points, you may be sensitive to the blood pressure raising effects of caffeine and should try to avoid or limit your intake.

8. **Reduce your stress** by being aware of what is causing you the most stress. Try to eliminate or minimize your contact with them. If that's not likely, learn some coping skills such as deep-breathing, yoga, or meditation. Schedule a massage. If self-help isn't enough, seek professional counseling.

9. **Monitor your blood pressure at home.** Screenings are often available free at local pharmacies. Make regular doctor appointments to keep on track.



10. And **get support from family and friends.** You don't have to do this alone!!



Black Bean & Sweet Potato VEGGIE BURGERS



mywholefoodlife.com

Ingredients:

- 3 Sweet potatoes, cooked, peeled and mashed
- 1 Can of black beans, drained and rinsed
- 3/4 cup cooked quinoa
- 1/2 teaspoon Cumin
- 1/4 cup bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts
- Splash of Almond milk as needed

Mix together all ingredients. Sprinkle in cumin, salt and pepper. Add bread crumbs, walnuts and milk and mix. Form into small patties. Bake at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes on each side **And Enjoy!**





National Women's Health Week

May 11 - 17, 2014

National Women's Health Week was created in the effort to raise awareness about steps women could take to improve their own health. The focus is on the importance of incorporating simple preventive and positive health behaviors into everyday life. During National Women's Health Week, women should discuss with their health care professionals which of the tests are right for them, when they should have them, and how often. Maintaining regular check-ups is one of five health habits that can improve a woman's health. The others include physical activity, a healthy diet, not smoking and follow general safety rules.

Simple Health Steps for Women of All Ages by WebMD

Women in their 20's and 30's

1. Start a heart-healthy diet-and-exercise plan.

Skip the fried and fatty foods, and strive for at least half an hour of exercise daily. Eating right and keeping active are the gifts that keep on giving. If you establish these habits now, the benefits will last a lifetime. And if you plan on having children someday, it's a good idea to take a multivitamin that gives you plenty of folic acid now. Research shows that taking 400 micrograms of folic acid daily for a year before becoming pregnant reduces the risk of premature delivery.

2. Work on your relationship -- with your doctor, that is.

Locate a healthcare provider you trust. Develop a list of questions: What contraceptive method is right for you? What is the best way to prevent STDs?

3. Know your family health history.

Did your sister, mother or grandmother die of breast cancer or heart disease at 50? Does early-onset diabetes run in the family? These are important questions to ask your parents and grandparents while you still can.

4. Don't forget key screening tests.

Make sure you get your annual Pap smears and regular breast exams by a health professional. Monthly breast self-exams are considered "optional." Check out the Susan G. Komen Foundation's interactive tool at <http://www.komen.org/bse/> for the instructional techniques. Some doctors also recommend thyroid screenings for pregnant women or women thinking about becoming pregnant.

Women in their 40's and 50's

1. Revisit your contraceptive method.

"If you've been on oral contraceptives, as you get older you may want to consider switching to an IUD or other method, due to cardiovascular risk factors," says JoAnn Manson, chief of the division of preventive medicine at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital. Birth control pills may increase some women's risk of heart disease.

2. Manage menopause.

One day, it's birth control; the next, hot flashes. Welcome to midlife. Talk to your medical provider before menopausal symptoms kick in and discuss what you might want to do to decrease discomfort. "If you have moderate to severe menopausal symptoms and are at low risk for breast cancer and heart disease, short-term hormonal therapy (HRT) might be right for you," Manson says.

3. Keep an eye on your calcium.

As you're moving into menopause, it's a critical time for women to preserve bone health and stave off osteoporosis. If you don't get enough dairy in your diet, take a twice-daily supplement with calcium and vitamin D. Vitamin D is the key that unlocks the calcium so your body can use it. Ask your doctor whether you should have a bone density scan to screen for early osteoporosis.

4. Don't forget key screening tests.

Make sure you get regular mammograms starting at age 40, diabetes screening starting at 45, and a colonoscopy at age 50. (earlier if you're at high risk). Also, because thyroid disease is common in older women, ask your doctor whether you should consider a thyroid screening.

Women in their 60's and Up

1. Use it or lose it.

"As we age, it's important to pay attention to cognitive function and try to stay mentally alert and stimulated," says JoAnn Manson, chief of the division of preventive medicine at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital. That means keeping your brain busy. Read, do crossword puzzles, socialize, try new hobbies, embark on new adventures. (Maybe it's finally time to learn French!)

2. Strength training: it's never too late to start.

At 65, you may think the heaviest thing you should lift is the remote. Not true! We inevitably lose bone mass and flexibility with age. But regular strength training (with approval from your doctor, of course) can keep you on your toes, prevent muscles from atrophying, and help you avoid falls and other accidents.

3. There's still time to quit!

If you've been trying for years to kick an unhealthy habit such as smoking or drinking to excess, don't figure that the damage has already been done. It has -- but you can repair or reduce some of it if you quit now. Studies have found that people who stop smoking at age 65 add almost two years to their lives, cutting heart disease and lung cancer risks.

4. Don't forget key screenings tests! Consult your doctor.

