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Wellness Works

The Number You Don't Know Could Kill You

Do you know what blood pressure is? Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. When blood pressure is elevated (hypertension), the heart is forced to work harder than normal. With time, the heart muscle grows abnormally large, resulting in further strain to both the heart and arteries. This stress & strain relationship continues until something breaks the cycle. Knowing and tracking your blood pressure is important, as untreated hypertension can be an underlying risk factor for:

- Stroke & heart attacks
- Kidney & liver damage
- Vision damage
- Diabetes complications

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

UNDERSTANDING BLOOD PRESSURE READINGS

May is National Blood Pressure month. Since high blood pressure does not usually cause us to feel ill, you may not know you are at risk. If you don't know your blood pressure numbers, now would be a good time to find out. Look for a local pharmacy-sponsored blood pressure clinic. Check with your local Fire Department or County Health Department. Call your primary care physician and ask to stop by for the medical assistant to take your blood pressure.

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Steps to Manage Blood Pressure

Important Tip: One abnormal reading does not confirm a high blood pressure diagnosis. If you have a high reading, repeat the screening the next week. Keep a record of your readings. Several abnormal readings require physician follow-up.

Lifestyle Tips for preventing and managing high blood pressure

- Be physically active – aim for at least 30 minutes of movement 5 days a week.
- Increase your fruit and veggie intake - try for at least 5 a day (fresh, frozen, canned).
- Watch your sodium intake - less than 2,000 mg a day is a good target.
- Consume lean proteins - white meats, fish, beans and other legumes are best.
- Focus on using healthy fats - olive & canola oils, and eating plant-based fats such as avocados.

What Success Looks Like!

- Terry, a 57-year-old female has lost over 52 pounds in just over a year, with the help of Weight Watchers. She reports “I am now off blood pressure meds and my knees no longer hurt all the time. I feel like a different person.”
- John, a 73-year-old retiree, has made several changes to manage high blood pressure, and “to enjoy my retirement.” He quit smoking and now walks or rides a stationary bike an hour a day. “Now I am reading labels and making different food choices to keep my sodium intake at less than 1500 mg/day.” And, he is feeling good!

Contact healthybenefits@cisoregon.org to share your success story or for any questions or comments.



RESOURCES:

The American Heart Association website is one of the best sources for heart and blood pressure health information. You may want to visit [this link](#) and complete the What’s My Risk for a Heart Attack assessment.

CIS Benefits and your medical insurance partner (Regence or Kaiser Permanente) offer resources, programs and online programs for healthy blood pressure and hearts.

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