

WHAT YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND HIGH CHOLESTEROL – AND TIPS TO CONTROL THEM

THE FACTS

- African Americans have the highest rate of high blood pressure of all groups, and tend to develop it at a younger age than other groups.
- Nearly 45 percent of African-American men have borderline-to-high cholesterol.
- Your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers have a lot to do with your chances of having a heart attack or a stroke.
- Heart attacks and strokes are leading causes of death among African-American men.

High blood pressure and high cholesterol typically don't cause symptoms. That means you can have high blood pressure and high cholesterol even if you feel fine. Check your risk factors:

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE RISK FACTORS

- Excessive weight
- A family history of high blood pressure
- Having diabetes
- Inactivity
- High dietary salt and fat
- Low intake of potassium (found in fruits and vegetables)
- Smoking
- Increased age

HIGH CHOLESTEROL RISK FACTORS

- Cigarette smoking
- High blood pressure (140/90 mmHg or higher or on blood pressure medication)
- Low HDL cholesterol (less than 40 mg/dL)
- Family history of early heart disease (heart disease in father or brother before age 55; heart disease in mother or sister before age 65)

THE BEST NUMBERS FOR HEART HEALTH

Blood pressure less than 120 over less than 80

Total cholesterol less than 200 (mg/dL)

- Check your numbers by having simple tests done at your doctor's office.
- If you have one or both of these conditions, you can improve your numbers. Remember that changing your lifestyle can be as effective as taking medication.
- If your tests show you don't have these conditions, prevention is still important so you don't develop them later on.

WAYS TO PREVENT OR LOWER HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND HIGH CHOLESTEROL

- Eat Healthy: Five or more servings of fruits and vegetables; less salt, sweets and fat; smaller portions.
- Be Active: 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.
- Don't Smoke: Check out successful programs to kick the habit for good.
- Drink Less or No Alcohol: No more than 2 drinks per day.
- If your doctor prescribes medication, take it exactly like he or she tells you.

EAT HEALTHY AT MEAL TIME

Cooking at home gives you more control over what you eat. Consider these tips to make meals healthy. Share them with your family – especially the cook, if you don't cook!

FILL HALF OF YOUR PLATE WITH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

- Eat red, orange and dark-green vegetables, such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes and broccoli, in main and side dishes.
- Have fruit for dessert instead of high-fat, sugary items.
- Switch to skim or 1% milk. They have the same amount of calcium and other essential nutrients as whole milk, but less fat and calories. Or try calcium-fortified soy products as an alternative to dairy foods.
- Eat fruit, vegetables or unsalted nuts when you snack – they are nature’s original fast foods.

MAKE AT LEAST HALF YOUR GRAINS WHOLE.

- Choose 100% whole grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice and pasta.
- Check the ingredients list on food packages to find whole-grain foods.

VARY YOUR PROTEIN FOOD CHOICES.

- Twice a week, make fish (but not fried fish) the protein on your plate.
- Eat beans, which are a natural source of protein and fiber.
- Keep meat and poultry portions small and with as little fat as possible.

STEER CLEAR OF BAD FATS AND LIMIT SALT AND SALT-BASED SEASONINGS.

- Avoid adding or cooking with butter, lard or shortening that has “trans fats” on the label.
- Don’t add salt while cooking, and taste food before adding salt.
- Avoid seasonings like garlic salt while cooking, too. Try garlic powder instead.
- Eat frozen or fresh vegetables and fruits whenever possible, or rinse canned vegetables to get rid of some of the salt.
- Read food labels and check the amount of sodium (salt) in a serving. Your daily intake of salt from everything you eat should be 2,300 mg or less.

Check out the DASH diet for more ideas:

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf

GET MOVING

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control advises that getting at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise 5 days of the week (150 minutes total) is a good benchmark for almost everyone. So, what is moderate aerobic exercise? Moderate intensity generally means that your breathing and heart rate are noticeably faster but you can still carry on a conversation:

- Brisk walking
- Light yard work
- Light snow shoveling
- Actively playing with children
- Biking at a casual pace
- Light workout with weights
- Dancing

You can even divide the 30 minutes into three periods of at least 10 minutes each!

Check with your doctor before you start being physically active if you have heart disease, if you’re over age 50 and are not used to moderate-level physical activity, if you have a family history of heart disease at an early age, or if you have any other serious health problem.

