

May is High Blood Pressure Month

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Lying awake at night worrying if radiation levels from Japan will get you? Consider, instead, a threat that's far closer to home, and one that you can control: high blood pressure. According to the American Heart Association, almost 50 million Americans have high blood pressure. Only 61% of people with high blood pressure are being treated for it and less than 30% of them do not have it under control. **One-third of the people with high blood pressure are not even aware they have it, because they do not experience any symptoms.**



The exact cause of high blood pressure is not known, however, family history, excess weight and the presence of diabetes can increase your risk for getting high blood pressure. Men and women over the age of 60 are also at a greater risk, but even people in their 20's and 30's may also develop this condition. African American males are also at higher risk for developing this condition.

You can prevent or delay the development of high blood pressure by:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Being physically active at least 30 minutes a day
- Eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products and lean meats
- Limiting the use of salt or high sodium processed foods
- Avoiding tobacco products
- Limiting alcohol to 2 drinks per day for men and 1 drink per day for women
- Managing your stress level

The best way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have it checked at least once a year. If you are diagnosed with high blood pressure (>140/90), your doctor will probably want to follow-up more frequently to make sure lifestyle changes (as noted above) are properly managing it. If lifestyle changes do not sufficiently control your blood pressure levels, medications may be needed.

If left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, kidney or eye damage. Don't let this "silent killer" go untreated. Get your blood pressure checked this month and find out if you are at risk so can take the proper steps needed to control your blood pressure.

Source: *American Heart Association*

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