

Monthly
Wellness
SpotLight
by PSA



IN GOOD HEALTH

SHOW YOUR HEART SOME LOVE THIS FEBRUARY!

Hypertension, also known as High Blood Pressure, is often called the silent killer. Nearly 1/2 of adult Americans have high blood pressure, and many are not aware because there are no symptoms in the early stages. People attribute their high blood pressure to life challenges and believe that it will return to normal when the situation resolves; however, that is seldom the case. High blood pressure develops slowly over time and can be related to many different causes. The most common include:

- **Your family**—the more relatives in your family that have hypertension, the greater your risk.
- **Your age**—your chances of developing high blood pressure increase as you age because our blood vessels lose elasticity over time.
- **Your gender**—Men are more likely to get high blood pressure before age 64. Women are more likely to get high blood pressure after age 65.
- **Your race**—African Americans tend to develop high blood pressure more often than other racial backgrounds, and it is difficult to treat.
- **Your kidneys**—Kidney Disease may cause high blood pressure.

In addition to hereditary and physical factors, there are other modifiable risk factors. You can make healthy changes now that may save your life down the road.

- **Increase your exercise routine**—Your heart loves physical activity, the more the better. A healthy heart will be less likely to develop high blood pressure.
- **Eat a well-balanced diet that is low in salt**—A diet that is high in salt, calories, trans fat, and sugar increases your risk for high blood pressure.
- **Watch your weight**—Being overweight causes more strain on your heart, which increases your risk.
- **Limit alcohol intake**—Heavy use of alcohol puts you at higher risk for many health problems, especially heart problems.

- **Prioritize sleep**—Untreated sleep apnea puts strain on your heart and can lead to high blood pressure. If you think you have sleep apnea, talk to your doctor about getting a sleep study.
- **Manage High Cholesterol**—Did you know that more than 1/2 of those with high cholesterol also have high blood pressure?
- **Manage Diabetes**—Its common for those with diabetes to develop high blood pressure.
- **Quit smoking**—Tobacco can temporarily increase blood pressure and can damage arteries. Tobacco users are at an increased risk for heart disease/hypertension.
- **Watch your stress level**—too much stress may lead to increased blood pressure. Stress also leads behaviors that may increase blood pressure. Reach out and talk to someone if things get to be too much. If your health plan has an Employee Assistance Program, that is a great resource.

Managing your blood pressure is a life-long commitment. In addition to the suggestions listed above, be sure to follow your doctor’s treatment program and take any medications as per their instructions. Use the [below chart](#) as a reference—strive to have your blood pressure be less than 120/80.

Blood Pressure Categories



BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120-129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130-139	or	80-89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120