



May is...National High Blood Pressure Education Month

PRESS RELEASE

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**May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month
Dental Hygienists Against Heart Disease Joins NHLBI
Mission to Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure**

May 2004 is National High Blood Pressure Education Month, and a growing number of organizations are joining together to increase public awareness of high blood pressure and promote improved prevention and control.

High blood pressure affects an estimated 50 million Americans - more than 1 in every 4 adults - and if not effectively treated, leads to millions of heart attacks, strokes, and kidney failure cases each year. Its economic cost to the nation exceeds \$100 billion each year.

According to C. Austin Risbeck, RDH, president and founder of Dental Hygienists Against Heart Disease, "High blood pressure is a major public health problem in the United States, and National High Blood Pressure Education Month provides a perfect opportunity to improve local understanding of the burden it places on all of us. By joining together with others concerned about high blood pressure throughout the country, we feel that we can help relieve this burden."

“Dental hygienists should include blood pressure screening as part of the dental hygiene appointment. Blood pressure screening is an important service that dental hygienists can provide, since 30 percent of the public are unaware they have hypertension, and 70 percent of those affected do not have it under control.”

“The new classification of prehypertension, affects 22 percent of the adult population. Blood pressure screening may establish the presence of hypertension, as well as hypertension control. Dental hygienists can refer those at risk for hypertension to an appropriate medical provider for further evaluation.”


National High Blood Pressure Education Month is an annual event coordinated by the National High Blood Pressure Education Program (NHBPEP) at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health

According to NHLBI Director Dr. Barbara Alving, "There is no question that the national effort to prevent, detect, and control high blood pressure is succeeding. But there is still a long way to go. National High Blood Pressure Education Month is a time to celebrate our successes and re-dedicate ourselves to increasing awareness of high blood pressure, its health and economic costs to our country, and the need for all of us to take action to prevent and control it."


High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and the chief risk factor for stroke and heart failure; it also can lead to kidney damage. Treatment seeks to lower blood pressure to less than 140 mm Hg systolic and less than 90 mm Hg diastolic for most persons with hypertension (less than 130 systolic and less than 80 diastolic for those with diabetes and chronic kidney disease).




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Eating High Blood Pressure
Away 

Sticking to It for National
High Blood Pressure Education
Month 

Know Your High Blood Pressure
Numbers for National High
Blood Pressure Education
Month 

Moving to Prevent and Control
High Blood Pressure 

Eating High Blood Pressure Away

It's National High Blood Pressure Education Month - time to take action to find out what your blood pressure numbers are, what they mean, and what you need to do to prevent or control this all too common condition. High blood pressure currently affects more than 50 million Americans. That's 1 in every 4 adults. And although it doesn't usually have any symptoms, if not prevented or controlled, it can lead to heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease, the first, third, and ninth leading causes of death in the United States.

The good news is that high blood pressure can be prevented, and it can be controlled. How can you prevent it? By maintaining a healthy weight; being physically active; following a healthy eating plan; eating less salt and sodium; and limiting your alcohol consumption. These same lifestyle changes can help reduce and control your blood pressure as well and make your medications work better.

One step that you can get started on right away is to begin to follow a healthy eating plan. Research has shown that a healthy eating plan called DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) can both reduce your chances of developing high blood pressure and lower your blood pressure if it's already high.

The DASH eating plan emphasizes fresh fruits and vegetables and low fat dairy products. And, it's moderate in total fat and low in saturated fat and cholesterol. It also includes whole grains, poultry, fish, and nuts. And if you also reduce your salt and sodium intake, it works even better.

Starting on the DASH eating plan is fairly easy. It requires no special foods and has no hard-to-follow recipes. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- * Make gradual changes like adding a serving of fruit or vegetables at lunch and dinner.
- * Gradually increase your use of fat free and lowfat dairy products to 3 servings a day.
- * Gradually cut in half the amount of butter, margarine, or salad dressing you eat.
- * If you now eat large portions of meat, cut them back by a half or third at each meal.
- * Try 2 or more vegetarian-style (meatless) meals each week.
- * Try casseroles and pasta and stir-fry dishes, which have less meat and more vegetables, grains, and dry beans.
- * Try fresh or dried fruits, raw vegetables, or lowfat and fat free yogurt for snacks.

For more information about the DASH eating plan, tips for getting started, sample meal plans, and even recipes, visit the NHLBI's Your Guide to Controlling High Blood Pressure at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/index.html> and click on Prevention.

Sticking to It for National High Blood Pressure Education Month

It's National High Blood Pressure Education Month - a good time to remind yourself to stick to your high blood pressure treatment plan.

High Blood pressure can cause damage without showing any signs or symptoms. That's why it's called "The Silent Killer." But while you may feel fine, high blood pressure is taking its toll on your heart, your blood vessels, and your kidneys. In fact, high blood pressure is one of the most important factors leading to heart attacks, strokes, congestive heart failure, and kidney disease. High blood pressure also increases your chances of dementia.

But the appropriate medications, along with some lifestyle changes like healthy eating, physical activity, and weight control, can reduce and control your blood pressure.

Are you taking your medications as your doctor prescribed? Here are some tips to help you do this:

1. Take your medications at the same time every day. For example, if your doctor told you to take your pills with food, try taking them at meal time every day. Or, take your medications at the same time as you do some other regular activity - like brushing your teeth.
2. Keep your pills near the kitchen table or your toothbrush as another reminder to take your medication at the same time as you eat or brush your teeth.
3. Try using a special pillbox that helps keep your pills organized. You can buy these containers at most drugstores or pharmacies.

4. Write yourself reminder notes. Put them on the refrigerator, by the phone, on the medicine cabinet, or even on the bathroom mirror.
5. Ask for help. Family or friends can be a great support system. Put together a team. If you have friends who also take medication, help remind each other.
6. Put a favorite picture of a loved one on the refrigerator with a note that says, "Remember to Take Your High Blood Pressure Medicine and Stick Around for Them."

For other tips and more information about controlling your high blood pressure, visit "Your Guide to Controlling High Blood Pressure" online at

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/index.html>.

Know Your High Blood Pressure Numbers for National High Blood Pressure Education Month

Knowing to call 911 in an emergency can save your life. So can knowing your blood pressure numbers. Hopefully, they are less than 120/80 mmHg, which is normal. If they're not, take advantage of National High Blood Pressure Education Month to ask your doctor what you should do about your blood pressure numbers. Then do it.

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of arteries and other blood vessels. It rises and falls during the day. When it stays elevated over time, it becomes a life-threatening condition -- high blood pressure (also called hypertension). High blood pressure will eventually injure the blood vessels in the heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes. This may result in heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, and blindness.

Blood pressure is recorded as two numbers-the systolic pressure (the force of the blood against the artery walls as the heart beats) over the diastolic pressure (the force of the blood as the heart relaxes between beats). A blood pressure level of 140/90 mmHg or higher is considered high. If your blood pressure is between 120/80 mmHg and 139/89 mmHg, you have *prehypertension*. This means that even though you don't have high blood pressure now your chances of having a heart attack or stroke are increased.

About two-thirds of people over age 65 have high blood pressure. If you do not have high blood pressure at age 55, you face a 90 percent chance of developing it during your remaining lifetime. So high blood pressure is a condition that *most people have at some point in their lives*.

Fortunately, high blood pressure can be prevented and controlled. Often lifestyle changes can prevent or control it. These include:

- * Losing weight, if necessary, and maintaining a healthy weight;
- * Being physically active most days of the week;
- * Eating less salt and sodium;
- * Following a healthy eating plan rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low fat dairy foods, moderate in total fat and cholesterol, and low in saturated fat and trans fat;
- * If you drink alcoholic beverages, doing so in moderation.

If these lifestyle changes aren't enough to reduce your blood pressure, your doctor will prescribe medication. Work closely with your doctor to find the best dose, and then take your medication as your doctor prescribes.

Remember, knowing your blood pressure numbers and then making lifestyle changes and, if necessary, taking appropriate medications can save your life.

For more information on how to prevent and control high blood pressure, visit "Your Guide to Controlling High Blood Pressure" online at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/index.html>.

Moving to Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month - a good time to check out what your blood pressure numbers are, what they mean, and what you need to do to prevent or control this all too common condition. High blood pressure currently affects 1 in every 4 American adults. And although it has no signs or symptoms, uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease, the first, third, and ninth leading causes of death in the United States.

The good news, though, is that high blood pressure can be prevented. And, it can be controlled. You can prevent or control high blood pressure by maintaining a healthy weight; following a healthy eating plan, eating less salt and sodium, limiting your alcohol consumption, and being physically active.

Let's talk about physical activity. It is one of the most important things you can do to prevent or control high blood pressure. Just 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week will help. You can even divide the 30 minutes into shorter periods of at least 15 minutes each.

Plus, you don't have to go to a gym to get those 30 minutes. You can work them into your everyday activities. For example, take stairs instead of an elevator or escalator when it's practical. Park your car a little farther from where you're going than usual. If you take public transportation, get off a stop early and walk the rest of the way.

Here are some activities that will provide you with moderate exercise:

- * Brisk walking (at 3-4 miles an hour)
- * Cleaning house
- * Mowing the lawn or raking leaves
- * Bicycling (at a moderate speed of 10 miles per hour or less)
- * Dancing.

Most people don't need to see a doctor before they start a moderate-level activity, but if you have heart trouble or have had a heart attack, if you are older and are not used to doing a moderate-level activity, if you have a family history of heart disease at an early age, or if you have any other serious health problem, check it out with your doctor first.

For more information about how to prevent or control high blood pressure, visit the NHLBI's Your Guide to Controlling High Blood Pressure Web site at

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/index.html>.

Want Some Life Saving Advice?

Ask Your Dental Hygienist About What to Expect from a Dental Hygiene Appointment

Dental hygienists are licensed oral health care professionals who have completed extensive educational and clinical preparation in preventive oral health care.

In all states but one, to become licensed, dental hygienists must graduate from an accredited dental hygiene education program, pass the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination, and pass a state/regional clinical licensure examination.

Accredited education programs are offered at universities and community and technical colleges, with programs varying from two to four years in length, but including prerequisites, averaging three. Graduates may obtain a bachelor's degree, an associate degree, or a certificate, depending on the program. Some dental hygienists go on to earn Master's and Doctorate degrees.

In addition, continuing advances in the dental hygiene field and changing laws in many states have encouraged virtually all registered dental hygienists to participate in continuing education courses, keeping them up to date on the latest trends in dental hygiene practice and legislation regarding the profession.

So What Should You Expect from Your Dental Hygienist?

Registered dental hygienists can provide a wide range of services as determined by laws in each state. These services include the following:

- After assessing a patient's individual oral health condition and incorporating the most current scientific research, including consideration of the impact of oral health on diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, dental hygienists plan a specific treatment plan designed to make sure each patient has the best oral health possible.
- Targeted and specific dental hygiene treatment for children, adolescents, adults, older adults, and patients who are medically compromised.
- Because targeted and specific systemic diseases like heart disease and diabetes, as well as other conditions, have signs and symptoms that appear in the mouth first, dental hygienists monitor for evidence of disease, and where they find suspicious conditions, inform the patient and recommend a visit to a physician.
- While assessing a patient's overall health, they also look for problems such as caries (cavities) and periodontal (gum) disease.

Who's Taking Care of Your Oral Health?

When you go for your oral health appointment, make sure you are receiving care from a properly educated and licensed oral health prevention specialist—a registered dental hygienist.

- Ask the person delivering care if he or she has graduated from an education program accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation.
 - Look to see if the dental hygienist's "RDH" license is in plain view.
 - Get to know your dental hygienist by name.
 - Ask your dental hygienist for treatment and at-home-care plans.
 - Ask your dental hygienist to recommend oral health products that are specially formulated for your oral health care needs.
 - Prevention is the key: discuss any questions or concerns you have about oral health as part of total health with your dental hygienist.
- Dental hygienists perform thorough head-and-neck examinations to look for oral cancer and other problems.
 - To prevent and treat disease, they remove plaque (a stubborn film that contains bacteria), both above and below the gum line.
 - To prevent caries, dental hygienists provide nutrition counseling, apply fluorides or pit-and-fissure sealants, and in some states, polish and contour fillings.
 - Because dental hygienists specialize in preventive oral health care, they educate their patients, the community, and schools on oral health and its effect on overall health, as well provide dietary education and counseling.
 - They expose, develop, and interpret oral X-rays.
 - In many states, registered dental hygienists administer local anesthesia and/or nitrous oxide.
 - Dental hygienists also evaluate how their recommendations are working and, when necessary, revise treatment as it progresses to help patients achieve their oral health goals.



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