



Tips To Control High Blood Pressure

(NAPSA)—High blood pressure can greatly increase your risk for heart disease and stroke, but there's good news if you are living with this condition. In addition to medication, there are proactive steps you can take to control your blood pressure and help improve your heart health.

Certain populations, such as women and African-Americans, are at greater risk for high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, according to the American Heart Association. After the age of 65, a higher percentage of women have hypertension as compared to men. Additionally, approximately 40 percent of African-American women have high blood pressure. Higher rates of obesity and diabetes, compared to other groups, also put African-Americans at greater risk for high blood pressure and heart disease.

Other risk factors, such as family history, advanced age, lack of physical activity and poor diet—especially one that includes too much salt—can also contribute to high blood pressure.

Tips For Taking Control

Take control of your blood pressure with these six tips from the American Heart Association that are good for your heart and brain:

1. De-stress. Take a break from work and listen to relaxing music or meditate.

2. Fit in physical activity. Regular, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity can help keep your blood pressure and cholesterol at heart-healthy levels and help you maintain a healthy weight. Walking is a great way to get started, but also consider jogging, yoga or a cardio class.

3. Eat heart-healthy foods. Healthy foods give you more energy, keep your brain fed and help prevent other health problems. If you've got to "eat on the run," choose nutritious snacks.

4. Reduce your sodium intake. Eating too many salty foods can lead to high blood pressure. The average American consumes more than twice the 1,500 milligrams recommended by the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. More than 75 percent of the sodium consumed in the U.S. comes from processed and restaurant foods.

5. Limit caffeine. Water is usually the best choice.



Dr. Jennifer Mieres says it's important to be aware of risk factors that can contribute to high blood pressure.

6. Don't smoke. Smoking is the No. 1 preventable cause of death.

These factors hit home for Tisha Dixon-Williams. At 31, she thought she was pretty healthy, despite a junk-food diet. Then one day she felt dizzy and couldn't maintain her balance.

"I didn't want to accept that something could be wrong," she said. "I finally went to the doctor, and when I walked in my blood pressure was 190 over 120. I was a walking stroke."

The Brooklyn resident also found out that high blood pressure ran in her family. She now controls her risk by doing something she loves: dancing. Other positive lifestyle changes, such as eating more nutritious foods as well as taking blood pressure medication, have helped her gain control both on and off the dance floor.

Taking small steps toward eating healthier and getting more physical activity is a commitment that more people need to adopt, said Jennifer Mieres, M.D., American Heart Association spokesperson and Medical Director, Center for Learning and Innovation, North Shore-LIJ Health System in New York.

"We need to remember that 80 percent of heart disease is preventable, so simple changes can help," she said.

For more information, including tools, resources and an online tracker, visit www.heart360.org/YouArethePower.