



## WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

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### You Can't Feel It, But Monitoring Is Important

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps blood. High blood pressure, sometimes called hypertension, happens when this force is too high. Healthcare workers check blood-pressure readings the same way for children, teens and adults. They use a gauge, stethoscope or electronic sensor, and a blood-pressure cuff. With this equipment, they measure:

- **Systolic pressure:** blood pressure when the heart beats while pumping blood
- **Diastolic pressure:** blood pressure when the heart is at rest between beats

Healthcare workers write blood-pressure numbers with the systolic number above the diastolic number. For example:

118/76 mmHg  
People read this as “118 over 76” millimeters of mercury.

Normal blood pressure for adults is defined as a systolic pressure below 120 mmHg and a diastolic pressure below 80 mmHg. It is normal for blood pressures to change when you sleep, wake up, or are excited or nervous. When you are active, it is normal for your blood pressure to increase. However, once the activity stops, your blood pressure returns to your normal baseline range. Blood pressure normally rises with age and body size. If your blood pressure is higher than normal when at rest, you may want to talk with your doctor about what you can do to bring it back to the normal range.

— Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



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## Seniors and Dental Health

### TIPS FOR MAINTAINING HEALTHY TEETH AND GUMS

As we get older, there are certain areas of our oral health that require more attention. These tips can help:

- **Continue to practice good oral hygiene.** Careful tooth brushing and flossing to reduce dental plaque can help prevent periodontal disease at any age.
- **See your dentist on a regular basis, even if you have dentures.** Professional care helps to maintain the overall health of the mouth and gums, and provides for early detection of pre-cancerous or cancerous lesions.
- **Avoid tobacco.** Smokers have seven times the risk of developing periodontal disease compared with non-smokers.
- **If medications produce a dry mouth, ask your doctor if there are other drugs that can be substituted.** If dry mouth cannot be avoided, drink plenty of water, chew sugarless gum and avoid tobacco and alcohol.

— Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## March Is National Nutrition Month

### MAKE THAT SNACK A HEALTHY ONE

“If you choose carefully and plan ahead, sensible snacks can be part of any healthful eating plan,” says registered dietitian nutritionist and Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics spokesperson Isabel Maples. “Snacks can prevent overeating at mealtimes and throughout the day,” she adds. “For children and adults alike, snacks can supply foods and nutrients that we might miss in meals. Snacks especially offer a great way to eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy.” Maples offers these suggestions:

- **Plan your snacks.** Keep a variety of tasty, nutrient-rich, ready-to-eat foods nearby for when you need a bite to take the edge off hunger.

Try fresh fruit, air-popped popcorn, whole-wheat crackers, dried fruit and nut mixes, almonds, and fat-free yogurt.

- **Go easy on high-calorie snacks such as chips, candy and soft drinks.** Save these for special occasions, not everyday snacks.
- **Snack when you’re hungry – not because you’re bored, stressed or frustrated.** “Exercise can actually be a great way to feed those emotional urges,” says Maples.

— Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics



## Colorectal Cancer TESTING SAVES LIVES

Colorectal cancer is cancer that starts in the colon or rectum. The colon and the rectum are parts of the large intestine, which is the lower part of the body’s digestive system. During digestion, food moves through the stomach and small intestine into the colon. The colon absorbs water and nutrients from the food and stores waste matter (stool). Stool moves from the colon into the rectum before it leaves the body.

Colorectal cancer often begins as a growth called a polyp, which may form on the inner wall of the colon or rectum. Some polyps become cancer

over time. Finding and removing polyps can prevent colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common type of cancer in men and women in the U.S. Deaths from colorectal cancer have decreased with the use of colonoscopy and fecal occult blood tests, which check for blood in the stool. Talk with your doctor about when you should begin routine screening for colorectal cancer, and which test(s) you should have.

— Source: National Cancer Institute

## Family Safety Update

### BUILD A BASIC EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT

You probably already have a first-aid kit in your home (and you should keep one in your car, as well). But have you created a basic emergency supply kit for your family? The Federal Emergency Management Agency suggests stocking your kit with the following:

- Water, one gallon per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and a NOAA weather radio with tone alert (and extra batteries for both)
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air, along with plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)



— Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency

### Did You Know?

#### EATING RIGHT FOR HEALTHIER KIDNEYS

According to the National Kidney Foundation, one in three Americans is at risk for developing kidney disease and approximately 26 million Americans have the disease. If you have chronic kidney disease, what you eat and drink can help slow the progression of the disease. Cooking and preparing your food from scratch can help you eat more healthfully. Choose and prepare foods with less salt, because controlling blood pressure helps with kidney health. Your diet should contain less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day, according to the National Kidney Disease Education Program. Talk with your doctor about the correct amount for you. Also, choose foods that are heart healthy. This helps to keep fat from building up in your blood vessels, heart and kidneys.



— Sources: National Kidney Disease Education Program; National Kidney Foundation



## Your Skin

### IT'S BEEN A LONG, DRY WINTER — HERE'S HELP

Many older people suffer from dry spots on their skin, often on their lower legs, elbows and lower arms. Dry-skin patches feel rough and scaly. There are many possible reasons for dry skin, such as:

- Not drinking enough liquids
- Spending too much time in the sun or sun tanning
- Being in very dry air
- Smoking
- Feeling stressed
- Losing sweat and oil glands, which is common with age

Dry skin also can be caused by health problems, such as diabetes or kidney disease. Using too much soap, antiperspirant or perfume, and taking hot baths, can make dry skin worse. Some medicines can make skin itchy. Because older people have thinner skin, scratching can cause bleeding that may lead to infection. Talk to your doctor if your skin is very dry and itchy. Here are some ways to help dry, itchy skin:

- Use moisturizers, like lotions, creams or ointments, every day.
- Take fewer baths and use milder soap. Warm water is less drying than hot water. Don't add bath oil to your water. It can make the tub too slippery.
- Try using a humidifier.

— Source: National Institute on Aging



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**Asthma Tip Sheet** HOW TO USE A METERED-DOSE INHALER

Here are general steps for using a metered-dose inhaler. Ask your doctor to show you how to use your inhaler. Review your technique at each visit.

1. Take off cap. Shake the inhaler. Prime (spray or pump) the inhaler as needed according to instructions.
2. If you use a spacer or valved holding chamber (VHC), remove the cap and look into the mouthpiece to make sure nothing is in it. Place the inhaler in the rubber ring on the end of the spacer/VHC.
3. Stand up or sit up straight.
4. Take a deep breath in. Tilt head back slightly and blow out completely to empty your lungs.
5. Place the mouthpiece of the inhaler or spacer/VHC in your mouth and close your lips around it to form a tight seal.

6. As you start to breathe in, press down firmly on the top of the medicine canister to release one "puff" of medicine. Breathe in slowly (gently) and as deeply as you can for 3 to 5 seconds.
7. Hold your breath and count to 10.
8. Take the inhaler or spacer/VHC out of your mouth. Breathe out slowly.
9. If you are supposed to take 2 puffs of medicine per dose, wait 1 minute and repeat steps 3 through 8.
10. If using an inhaled corticosteroid, rinse your mouth with water and spit it out. Rinsing will help to prevent an infection in the mouth.

— Source: National Asthma Education and Prevention Program

**Kids and Food**

**MAKE IT A HEALTHY CONNECTION**

Want your kids to eat a healthier diet? Plan meals in advance and ask them for suggestions. Take kids to the store to pick out fruit and vegetables themselves. Have appropriate snack foods readily available.

Encourage and offer foods from all food groups at meals. Eat breakfast daily. Take time to eat slowly, enjoy food and let the body begin the digestive process. It takes about 20 minutes to feel full. Eat until satisfied, not stuffed.

— Source: Children's Hospital Colorado