



Healthy Habits

The newsletter for busy Cal employees who want to improve their health!

March 30, 2009

WEEK 6

Hypertension Rates on the Rise?!

Unfortunately so. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is an important health issue for people of all races and genders. Over the past decade the rates of hypertension have increased 18 percent, and even more in women. Currently one out of four women have high blood pressure. Ironically, hypertension rates should be improving because there are so many proven methods for

preventing and treating high blood pressure. Since many of these methods can be applied quite easily and at low cost, it is a bit of a conundrum that the rates of blood pressure keep increasing, especially since the possible consequences of hypertension can be so severe.

What is blood pressure?

Blood Pressure is the force the heart places against the arteries as it pumps blood through the body. Normal blood pressure is under 120/80. Chronic high blood pressure can cause permanent damage to the blood vessels raising your risk of heart attack, stroke, aneurysm, heart failure, kidney disease and/or failure, vision loss, and memory problems.

High blood pressure is known as the "silent killer" because you don't feel any symptoms, even at life-threatening levels. That's why it is important to get your blood pressure checked regularly.

Are you at risk of high blood pressure?

Although the exact cause of high blood pressure is unknown, there are factors known to increase your risk:

- Age (your risk increases as you age)
- Race (African-Americans are at higher risk)
- A family history of hypertension
- Excess weight, lack of exercise, and an unhealthy diet
- Tobacco use, high stress, and excess alcohol use

Certain medical conditions or medications can also increase your blood pressure. (cont'd)

You may not be able to change your race, age, or family, but there are many other things you *can* do. Luckily, small changes to lifestyle behaviors can do a lot for reducing your risk of hypertension:

Reduce your risk for high blood pressure:

- Maintain a healthy weight, or lose weight if you are overweight.
- Exercise regularly for at least 2 hours and 30 minutes a week, preferably spread out throughout the week.
- Eat a heart healthy diet, including fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, and foods low in sodium and saturated fat.
- Don't smoke or quit smoking.
- Drink alcohol in moderation.
- Learn to manage your stress. Try regular exercise, stretching, yoga, biofeedback.



*ADAM

Resources from the American Heart Association (americanheart.org)

- **Heart360** <https://www.heart360.org/Default.aspx>
This online interactive Cardiovascular Wellness Center will help you track and monitor your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood glucose, diet, and physical activity while providing personalized advice and info.
- **High Blood Pressure Risk Calculator**
<http://americanheart.org/presenter.ihtml?identifier=3027275>
- **High Blood Pressure Topics**
<http://americanheart.org/presenter.ihtml?identifier=2114>
For more information, tools, and topics about high blood pressure.

Announcements

Blood Drives @ UC Berkeley

Monday, April 6 or May 4

MLK Student Union

- Be a hero and support blood drives. Donate. Volunteer.
- Encourage others. Spread the word. Sponsor drives.
- uhs.berkeley.edu/home/blooddrives