

Take Measures to Lower Your Blood Pressure

As many as 50 million people in the United States either have high blood pressure or are taking medication to control their blood pressure. Blood pressure is the force of the blood flowing against the walls of your arteries. It's measured by two numbers called systolic and diastolic pressure. *Systolic* pressure is the pressure when the heart contracts and pumps blood through the body. *Diastolic* pressure is the pressure between pumps, when the heart is resting. A normal blood pressure reading is typically 120 (systolic) over 80 (diastolic). Blood pressure higher than this can raise your risk for stroke, kidney failure, heart disease, and heart attack.



What are the symptoms of high blood pressure? High blood pressure is unknown in about 90 percent of cases. Some factors that could cause high blood pressure are genetics, age, race, stress, obesity, smoking, a high-salt diet, excessive consumption of alcohol, and a sedentary lifestyle. Some people with high blood pressure may experience nose bleeds, racing or irregular heartbeats, headaches, and dizziness.

Here are several tips: • Have your blood pressure checked regularly by your doctor. • Stop smoking or using any forms of nicotine. • Limit your salt intake. • Eat more fresh vegetables and fruits as well as foods with high fiber and less fat. • Reduce stress in your life at home and work. • Exercise regularly and keep your weight at a healthy level. • If you're prescribed medicine, take it exactly as directed by your doctor.

For more information, visit the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp.

Stroke: Pay Attention to Signs

To lower your risk of stroke: First, take preventive measures to reduce your risk. Second, know stroke's signs and symptoms and get emergency treatment immediately if they occur. **If you or someone around you has these symptoms, call 911 immediately:** • Sudden weakness in the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side • Confusion, slurring of speech, or difficulty understanding • A change in vision, particularly in one eye • Trouble walking, signs of dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination • Sudden, severe, or unexplained head pain accompanied by a stiff neck, facial pain, pain between the eyes, nausea, or altered thinking.

For more information, visit the National Stroke Association at www.stroke.org.



The Skin You're In

Your skin conveys a lot about your health. The effects of a poor diet, stress, fatigue, smoking, excessive sunlight exposure all show up in your skin.

Changing your diet, reducing stress, getting more sleep, or giving up certain bad habits can result in a marked improvement in your skin's health and appearance. But damage from overexposure to the sun can accumulate long before you see evidence of it, and by the time the damage appears, you may be faced with the uneven skin tone and wrinkles of premature aging. Or you could be dealing with a more serious condition, such as skin cancer.

Be Savvy about Skin Cancer

More than 1 million people in the United States are diagnosed with skin cancer each year, and approximately 50 percent of all people will suffer some type of skin cancer by age 65. With days of summer sunshine just ahead, be sure you protect your skin adequately from too much exposure to the sun's rays.

To minimize your risk of skin cancer and provide the protection you need: • Avoid spending time in the sun from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. • Don't leave the house before applying a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 15. • Wear a hat and sunglasses to protect skin not covered by sunscreen.

Early detection is the key to the successful treatment of any type of skin cancer. Basal and squamous cell carcinomas have a cure rate of up to 90 percent with early detection and treatment. Even melanoma, generally the most serious form of skin cancer, may be cured if identified and treated early enough.

To spot potential problems, visit your dermatologist once a year and perform a head-to-toe skin self-exam once a month.

Skin Self-Exams

All marks on your body, whether they're freckles, scars, moles, age spots, or birthmarks, should be monitored for the following: • *Asymmetry*: not uniform in shape • *Border*: jagged, irregular, or blurred borders • *Color*: not uniform in color; a mix of brown, black, red, blue, or white • *Diameter*: larger than a pencil eraser (approximately 1/4 inch in diameter) • *Elevation*: raised marks or uneven texture. In addition, a mole that itches, bleeds, doesn't heal, or grows rapidly requires an evaluation by your healthcare provider.

By actively patrolling the health of your skin, you can help it look younger and stay healthier for years to come.

For more information on skin care, visit the RealAge Skin Care Center at <http://www.realage.com/RealBeauty/intro.aspx>.

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