What’s Your Number?

May Measurement Month and World Hypertension Day

During May, the World Hypertension League (WHL) and the International Society of Hypertension (ISH) celebrate May Measurement Month (MMM) and World Hypertension Day (May 17). This year, the theme is Know Your Numbers.

The goal of this world-wide event is to increase awareness about hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, and to remind people to have their blood pressure checked by their health care providers.

Read on to learn more about hypertension – what it is, what can put you at risk, what the symptoms are, and how it is treated.

Save the Date: June Health Talk

Our next health talk will be happening on June 12th from 1:00 – 2:30 pm. Topic and speaker details are being confirmed and the flyer will be released soon.

For more info or to register, please contact Becky at 416-340-4800 ext. 5647 or Becky.Quinlan@uhn.ca.

Notice: We will be closed on Monday, May 21 for Victoria Day.
Hypertension means High Blood Pressure

What is blood pressure?

Every time your heart beats, it pumps out blood into your arteries. As the blood goes all over your body in the arteries, it pushes against the arterial walls. This pushing force allows blood to deliver oxygen and nutrients throughout your body. This force is known as “blood pressure.”

There are two measurements of blood pressure:

**Systolic** blood pressure is your highest blood pressure measurement. It occurs when your heart beats.

**Diastolic** blood pressure is your lowest pressure measurement. It occurs when your heart relaxes.

What is a normal blood pressure?

A blood pressure of 130/80 mmHg is normal, but, you will need to find out what a normal blood pressure is for you by talking with your doctor. You should know that some activities increase your blood pressure. Jogging and stress will raise your blood pressure, while sleeping and medication will lower your blood pressure.

What is high blood pressure?

High blood pressure is also called “Hypertension.” This means that the pressure in your arteries is above your normal or healthy range. Your blood pressure will always stay high, unless it is treated.

What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

You cannot feel high blood pressure and you may not know that you have high blood pressure.

You may, however, have some of these signs and symptoms:

- headaches (lasting several days)
- dizziness
- blurry vision
- shortness of breath
- frequent, irregular heartbeats
- sweating
- anxiety ease your blood pressure

You should have your blood pressure checked at least once a year at your doctor’s office. It is also a good time to have your cholesterol, kidney and blood sugar levels checked, too. It is important for you to know that one high reading of 140/90 mmHg does not mean that you have high blood pressure.

Ask your doctor to measure it at least two other times, on separate days, to check whether it is always high.

What can happen if my high blood pressure is not treated?

High blood pressure can damage the lining of your arteries anywhere in the body. If left untreated, it can lead to atherosclerosis [ath-uh-roh-skluh-roh-sis], or narrowing of the arteries.

Atherosclerosis may lead to conditions such as:

- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Kidney failure
- Peripheral artery disease (PAD)
- Retinal or eye damage
- Impotence

Living with high blood pressure

What you can do?

There are many healthy choices you can make to keep your blood pressure at a healthy level. This helps prevent your important organs, like your brain, eyes, heart, and kidneys from being damaged.
Medications
• Take your blood pressure medication as prescribed by your doctor, even when you are feeling well. You will usually have to take your blood pressure medications for life.
• Keep an up-to-date record of all your medications with you at all times
• When you travel, take along extra medications in case of unexpected delays.
• Be aware that some over-the-counter medication, herbal or non-prescription medications can increase your blood pressure. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medications.

Exercise
• Exercise 30-60 minutes at least three to four times a week.
• Maintain a healthy body weight. If you are overweight, losing weight until you get to your ideal body weight can help reduce your blood pressure.

Salt or Sodium
Reduce the amount of salt you eat by eating less foods with added salt (for example, eat less snack foods and smoked, salted, cured or canned meats and fish). Use less salt when cooking and at the table. The Canada Food Guide says that you should eat no more than 1 teaspoon (tsp) of salt every day (2300mg).

Potassium
• Check with your healthcare professional to see if you should eat foods rich in potassium. Some potassium-rich foods are bananas, cantaloupes, grapefruits, oranges, tomato or prune juice, melons, prunes, molasses and potatoes.
• Eat whole grains, lean meat, and fish.

Stress
• Find healthy ways to manage your stress. Too much stress may increase your blood pressure. Being able to cope with stress is just as important as reducing the amount of stress in your life.
• Avoid unhealthy ways to relieve stress (such as smoking, drinking alcohol, or eating fast foods high in salt and fat when you feel stressed). Find relief with exercise, socializing, laughter, and healthy eating instead.

Other Tips
• Do not drink more than 1 to 2 standard alcohol drinks each day; a maximum of 9 drinks per week for women and 14 drinks per week for men.
• Quit smoking and avoid second-hand smoke. Talk to your healthcare provider for solutions to help you quit smoking.

Learn More
You can ask your health care provider for more information about your blood pressure. To learn more on your own, visit one of these websites, or the Patient & Family Library at your UHN site.
• Heart and Stroke Foundation
  www.heartandstroke.ca
• Hypertension Canada
  hypertension.ca

The Patient & Family Learning Centre and Libraries have a variety of books and brochures for you to learn more about managing high blood pressure.

TGH Patient & Family Library
First Floor, Norman Urquhart Building
(Near the Outpatient Pharmacy)
Phone: 416 340 4800 ext. 5951
Email: tgp@uhn.ca

Adapted from the UHN Patient Education Brochure “High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)”. For the full brochure, contact the Patient Library or visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca.
Our diverse health care solutions include:

### Home Health Care Services

Our home health care division, **Spectrum Health Care**, can provide you or your loved one with:
- Nursing
- Personal and Home Support
- Palliative and Advanced Illness Care
- Wound and Ostomy Care
- Physiotherapy
- Foot Care
- Family Caregiver Support
- Immunization Clinics

### Patient Transfer Services

Our non-urgent patient transfer division, **Spectrum Patient Services**, can provide you or your loved one with:
- Stretcher Transfer Services
- Pediatric Transfer Services
- Wheelchair Transfer Services
- Dialysis Transfer Services
- Bariatric Transfer Services
- Hospital and Patient Shuttle Services

### Companion Services

Our non-medical seniors home care division, **Seniors for Seniors**, can provide you or your loved one with:
- Driver Companions
- Live-In/Drop-In Companions
- Overnight Companions
- Hospital Bedside Companions
- Handypersons
- House Cleaners

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