



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES

EMPLOYEE HEALTH UPDATE: BLOOD PRESSURE AWARENESS

High Blood Pressure: A Force to be Reckoned With

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of arteries. When that force stays too high, it becomes a life-threatening condition—high blood pressure (also called hypertension). It makes the heart work too hard, hardens the walls of arteries, and can cause the brain to hemorrhage or the kidneys to function poorly or not at all. A blood pressure reading of 140/90 mmHg or higher is considered high. Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mmHg. Click this link for more information on [What is High Blood Pressure?](#)

Who Does High Blood Pressure Impact?

- More than 72 million American adults — 1 in 3 — have high blood pressure.
- Nearly 60 million Americans are over age 55, which means they have a 90 percent likelihood of developing high blood pressure in their lifetimes.
- African Americans are more likely to develop high blood pressure than any other racial or ethnic group and tend to develop it earlier and more severely than others.
 - [Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure: Mission Possible What Every African American Should Know](#)
- 20 million Americans have diabetes, which increases their chances of developing high blood pressure.
- 142 million American adults are overweight or obese which increases their chances of developing high blood pressure.

Risky business

Anyone can develop high blood pressure. But these factors increase the risk: being overweight or obese, being physically inactive, high salt and sodium intake, low potassium intake (due to not eating enough fruits and vegetables), excessive alcohol consumption, and diabetes.

Why Should You Care?

- ☑ High blood pressure can lead to numerous other life-threatening conditions, including heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure, the #1, #3, and #9 causes of death in the United States.
- ☑ High blood pressure is a factor in 67 % of heart attacks and in 77 % of strokes—the #3 cause of death in the U.S.
- ☑ High blood pressure precedes 74 % of cases of heart failure in the United States.
- ☑ High blood pressure is the second leading cause of chronic kidney failure in the U.S.—responsible for 26% of all cases.
- ☑ High blood pressure causes more visits to doctors than any other condition.
- ☑ High blood pressure affects circulation—creating a higher risk for mental deterioration and Alzheimer's.
- ☑ High blood pressure and its complications cost the U.S. economy more than \$100 billion each year.



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Increasing physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight are powerful tools in managing blood pressure, and so is following the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan.

The DASH diet combines the right kinds and combinations of foods and nutrients to lower your blood pressure and keep it under control.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the U.S. government's National Institutes of Health developed the DASH plan to reduce blood pressure, finding that blood pressure went down after only two weeks of being on the diet. Since the initial studies, researchers have found the DASH plan may offer other health benefits, too, such as protection against osteoporosis, cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

The DASH plan is especially effective in reducing blood pressure in blacks and older adults. In addition, if adopted early, the DASH plan can prevent hypertension.

DASH Eating Plan and Recipe Links

Please click on the links below for the DASH Eating Plan and other Recipe Books to help lower your blood pressure.

- [The DASH Eating Plan](#)
- [Keep the Beat: Heart Healthy Recipes](#)
- [Heart-Healthy Home Cooking African American Style](#)

Controlling blood pressure reduces the risk of developing complications associated with hypertension, which include heart disease and stroke. New dietary guidelines from the American Heart Association recommend that everyone adopt an eating plan similar to the DASH diet and limit their sodium intake to less than 2,400 mg per day.

Keep your blood pressure in check by maintaining a healthy body weight, cutting down on dietary fat, and staying active.

Sources for this article and links to read more:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/index.htm#hbp>;
Mayo Clinic <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dash-diet/H10004Z>;
Harvard Medical School <http://www.health.harvard.edu/fhg/Harchive/healthy.101.shtml>.