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HYPERTENSION

Close to one in three Americans has high blood pressure (hypertension) and if you are among them, it's not something you can afford to ignore. High blood pressure is a "silent killer". Since it typically has no symptoms, patients find it tough to make lifestyle changes or see the need for treatment when they feel fine. The higher your blood pressure and the longer it remains untreated, the greater risk for serious medical problems. Blood pressure is the force of blood that travels through your arteries. If the pressure is too high, it can damage your blood vessels as well as the organs in your body. Complications of untreated hypertension include (but are not limited to) heart failure, heart attack, stroke, kidney damage, vision problems, and memory loss.

Normal: Less than 120/80 mm Hg.

Elevated: Systolic between 120 and 129 mm Hg and diastolic less than 80 mm Hg.

Stage 1: Systolic between 130 and 139 mm Hg or diastolic between 80 and 89 mm Hg.

Stage 2: Systolic at least 140 mm Hg or diastolic at least 90 mm Hg.

Hypertensive crisis: Systolic over 180 mm Hg and/or diastolic over 120 mm Hg, with patients requiring medication changes.

How to reduce your risk of complications:

1. Take all medications as prescribed. Never stop taking a medicine without talking with your provider first. Remember, not every medication works for every patient. The nature and severity of your diagnosis, the presence of coexisting cardiovascular risk factors or other health problems, and your other current medications will all influence the decision of which antihypertensive medication(s) is right for you.
2. Reach and maintain a healthy weight. A reduction in weight can help lower blood pressure.
3. Follow the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet. This diet is rich in vegetables, fruit and low-fat dairy. Foods high in saturated and total fat are limited.
4. Limit sodium (salt) intake.
5. Be active. Work up to 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week. Check with your provider before you start to exercise or increase your level of exercise.
6. Avoid alcohol.
7. Don't smoke. If you do, ask your provider for ways to help you quit.

For additional information or questions, please contact Cornerstone Primary Healthcare at 615-824-1616 and visit the American Heart Association website at www.heart.org.