

Message from the Parish Nurses

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BE HEART SMART

~ BLOOD PRESSURES MATTERS ~

Did you know that your blood pressure can be a good indicator of your heart's health? American College of Cardiology (ACC) and American Heart Association (AHA) issued on November 2017 new high blood pressure guidelines for the detection, prevention, management, and treatment of high blood pressure. The new guidelines are the first comprehensive set in the U.S. since 2003.

WHY BLOOD PRESSURE MATTERS?

High blood pressure (HBP or hypertension) puts your health and quality of life in danger. Left uncontrolled or untreated, high blood pressure can eventually lead to:

- Heart attack – HBP damages arteries that can become blocked and prevent blood from flowing to the heart muscle.
- Stroke – HBP can cause blood vesicles in the brain to burst or clog more easily.
- Heart failure - The increase workload from HBP can cause the heart to enlarge and fail to supply blood to the body.
- Kidney failure – HBP can damage the arteries around the kidneys and interfere with their ability to effectively filter blood.
- Vision loss – HBP can strain or damage blood vessels in the eye.

This is only a few examples of what HBP can cause!

WHY THE CHANGES IN THE GUIDLINES?

Research shows that adults with blood pressure readings considered prehypertensive under the old guidelines are already at up to double the risk of having a major cardiac event, a heart attack or stroke, compared to those with a normal blood pressure. The new guidelines will result in nearly half the U.S. adult population (46 percent) having high blood pressure, with the greatest impact expected among the younger people. However, only a small increase is expected in the number of adults requiring antihypertensive medication. If you already have a doubling of risk you need to know about it. It doesn't mean you need medication, but is making you aware that you need to be lowering your blood pressure, mainly with heart-healthy lifestyle changes.

2017 NATIONAL BLOOD PRESSURE GUIDELINES

Blood Pressure Classification in the new guidelines are:

- **Normal:** Less than 120/80
- **Elevated:** Systolic between 120-129 and Diastolic less than 80
- **Hypertension, Stage 1:** Systolic between 130-139 or Diastolic between 80-89
- **Hypertension, Stage 2:** Systolic at least 140 or Diastolic at least 90
- **Hypertension Crisis:** Systolic over 180 and/or Diastolic over 120

Recommendations are:

- **Normal:** Check in one year
- **Elevated:** Lifestyle changes + see doctor
Possible BP Lowering medications are recommended if risk factors are present*
Check in 1 month if risk factors*
If no risk factors, check in 3-6 months
- **Hypertension, Stage 1:** See doctor + lifestyle changes
BP Lowering medications are recommended if risk factors are present*
Check in 1 month if risk factors*
If no risk factors, check in 3-6 months
- **Hypertension, Stage 2:** See doctor + lifestyle changes
BP Lowering medications are recommended
Check in 1 month
- **Hypertension Crisis:** See doctor immediately

Risk factors* Cardio-vascular risk factors include: coronary artery disease, heart failure, diabetes, kidney disease, stroke or TIA.

Note: The new guidelines eliminate the category of prehypertension, categorizing patients as having either Elevated (120-129 and less than 80) or Hypertension, Stage 1 (130-139 or 80-89). While old guidelines classified 140/90 as Hypertension Stage 1, this level is classified as Hypertension Stage 2 under the new guidelines.

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More information can be found at:

<https://www.cardiosmart.org> search: High Blood Pressure Guidelines and High Blood Pressure Overview

www.heart.org/HEARTORG click on conditions for heart.org

Visit: www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org for “What Do Your Numbers Mean,” “Lifestyle Changes,” and “Alternative Medicine”. Click on Parish Health Newsletter.

WHAT DO YOUR NUMBERS MEAN?

Blood pressure is given as two numbers. You've probably heard health care providers say something like your blood pressure is, "130 over 80." So what do these numbers mean?

- **Systolic**, the top number: This is the pressure or force in the arteries when the heart pumps. When the heart contracts, the pressure in the arteries rises.
- **Diastolic**, the bottom number: This is the pressure in the vessels when the heart relaxes between heartbeats.

These numbers are measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg). In the new ACC/AHA High Blood Pressure Guidelines released in November 2017, high blood pressure is now defined as a systolic blood pressure above 130 mm Hg or diastolic blood pressure above 80 mm Hg, or both. You can have high blood pressure even if just one of the numbers is above what it should be. If you have a systolic blood pressure from 120-129 mm HG, and your blood pressure is less than 80 mm HG, then your blood pressure is elevated.

Even if your blood pressure is only slightly elevated, you need to take it seriously. There may be some lifestyle changes you need to make.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Lifestyle changes can help you control and prevent high blood pressure, even if you're taking blood pressure medication.

- **Eat heart-healthy foods.** Heart-healthy eating means eating vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, fish, poultry, lean meats, eggs, nuts, seeds, soy products, legumes, and vegetable oil (except coconut and palm oils). Your doctor may recommend the heart-healthy Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (Dash) eating plan because it has been proven to lower blood pressure and bad LDL cholesterol in the blood. Also, it limits sodium, saturated and trans fats, added sugars, and alcohol.
- **Decrease the salt in your diet.** Adults and children over the age of 13 should eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium a day. If you have high blood pressure, you may need to restrict your sodium even more. Talk to your doctor or health care provider about what amount of sodium is right for you or your child.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** If you are overweight, try to lose weight. Losing even 3-5 percent of your current weight can lower triglycerides and glucose levels in your blood, as well as your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Losing more than 3-5 percent of your weight

can improve blood pressure readings, lower bad LDL cholesterol, and increase good HDL cholesterol.

- **Increase physical activity.** Regular physical activity and reduction in sedentary lifestyle can improve physical fitness, help you lose weight, lower many heart disease risk factors such as bad LDL cholesterol levels and increasing good HDL cholesterol. Also physical activity can lower your risk for type 2 diabetes.
- **Don't smoke.** Tobacco injures blood vessel walls and speeds up the process of hardening of the arteries. If you smoke, ask your doctor to help you quit.
- **Limit alcohol.** Even if you're healthy, alcohol can raise your blood pressure. If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation. For healthy adults, that means up to one drink a day for women of all ages and men older than 65, and up to two drinks for men age 65 and younger. One drink equals 12 oz. of beer, 5 oz. of wine or 1.5 oz. of 80-proof liquor.
- **Manage stress.** Reduce stress as much as possible. Practice healthy coping techniques, such as muscle relaxation, deep breathing or meditation. Getting regular physical activity and plenty of sleep can help.

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Diet and exercise are the most appropriate strategies to lower your blood pressure, some supplements may also help. However, more research is needed to determine the potential benefits. These include:

- Fiber, such as blond psyllium and wheat bran
- Minerals, such as magnesium, calcium, and potassium
- Folic acid
- Supplements or products that increases nitric oxide or widen blood vessels (vasodilators), such as cocoa, coenzyme Q10, L-arginine or garlic.
- Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fatty fish, fish oil supplements or flaxseed

It is best to include these supplements in your diet as food, you can also take supplements as pills or capsules.

Always talk to your doctor before adding any of these supplements to your blood pressure treatment. Some supplements can interact with medication, causing harmful side effects, such as an increased bleeding risk that could be fatal.

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More information can be found at:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org> search: High Blood Pressure (hypertension)

<https://www.nih.gov> search: Heart-Healthy Lifestyle Changes