

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month

What is High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is abnormally high pressure in the arteries. Having high blood pressure can contribute to stroke, heart disease, heart attack, and kidney damage. Because high blood pressure usually does not cause any symptoms, it is often referred to as "the silent killer." About one in three American adults has high blood pressure.

Blood pressure is described as two numbers, called the **systolic** (top) and **diastolic** (bottom) readings.

Normal Blood Pressure: Systolic less than 120 and diastolic less than 80, written as 120/80.

How Many Risk Factors Do You Have?

Many people have high blood pressure and don't know it. The more boxes you check the more likely you are to have high blood pressure.

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you smoke? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you weigh more than you should? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you under a lot of stress? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are you African-American? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have diabetes, heart disease, or kidney disease? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you often eat salty, fried, or greasy foods? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you a man age 35 or older? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are you a woman age 45 or older? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you sedentary with little physical activity during the day? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a family history of high blood pressure? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have more than 2 drinks of alcohol almost every day? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you often get headaches or wake up with a headache? |

In most instances, high blood pressure has no warning signs. The best way to detect it is to have your blood pressure checked regularly.

What Can You Do?

You can do many things to help control your blood pressure, referred as lifestyle changes. Such as:

- Limit the amount of sodium (salt) you eat -- aim for less than 1,500 mg per day.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink -- 1 drink a day for women, 2 a day for men.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet -- include potassium and fiber, and drink plenty of water
- Stay at a healthy body weight.
- Exercise regularly -- at least 30 minutes a day. Like any other muscle, the heart needs exercise to stay fit. Get up and get active. Just be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.
- Reduce stress. Ongoing stress can increase your blood pressure. Make time to relax and enjoy life. Find time to laugh.
- If you smoke, quit. Smoking raises blood pressure and damages blood vessels. Ask your healthcare provider for assistance.

If lifestyle changes aren't enough, your doctor may prescribe medications. Be sure to follow directions:

- Take your medication at the same time each day.
- Find out if you should take it with meals.
- Do not stop taking your medication, unless your doctor tells you to.

From MerckSource

In a new partnership, MerckEngage.com gives you health tools with just a click

Free health support programs that offer a range of resources covering nutrition, physical activities, and treatment plan help are now available to Pottstown Medical Specialists Inc. (PMSI) patients, thanks to a new partnership forged between the practice and MerckEngage.com.



MerckEngage.com is a website sponsored by Merck Pharmaceuticals, the company that makes medications you may use regularly. It provides a convenient, easy, and no-cost way for PMSI patients to keep up-to-date on health topics, receive education and tips between office visits, and take advantage of easy-to-use

tools that can keep their healthy lifestyles on track. It supplies step-by-step guidance on things like meal planning (see recipe below).



New, and created with you in mind!

Welcome to PMSI's patient newsletter. You can look forward to monthly editions with tips to improve your health. Visit our website, **pmsiforlife.com**, for archived issues.

It offers prescription savings cards for eligible patients taking certain Merck medications. And patients can talk one-on-one with a health coach ... all at no charge!

Here at PMSI, we do hope you're getting some form of regular exercise. Even a little is better than none! For those who are exercise beginners, as well as those who are veteran exercise buffs, MerckEngage.com lets PMSI patients access an activity planning tool that could make a difference in how you feel about, and what benefits you're getting from, an exercise routine.

If you're following a treatment plan suggested by a PMSI physician, MerckEngage.com supplies a simple tracking tool that lets you monitor your health condition on your own, as well as share progress updates with PMSI staff members at our various offices in Bally, Boyertown, Collegeville, Pottstown, Phoenixville, Royersford, and Stowe.

The next time you visit a PMSI office, ask your physician or a staff member about how you can take advantage of all MerckEngage.com has to offer.

Calculating Your Waist Circumference

A high waist circumference and too much abdominal fat puts you at high risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and heart disease. **It means you need to lose weight.**

A high-risk waist circumference is:

- A man with a waist measurement over 40 inches
- A woman with a waist measurement over 35 inches

To measure your waist circumference, use a tape measure. Start at the top of the hip bone, then bring it all the way around -- level with your navel. Make sure it's not too tight and that it is parallel with the floor. Don't hold your breath while measuring it!

Carrot Salad with Raisins

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups shredded carrots
- 1 chopped apple
- ¼ cup chopped celery
- 5 tbsp raisins
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- ½ cup nonfat plain yogurt
- 1 tbsp honey



Makes 4 servings **Prep time: 10 mins**
Calories 104 **Calories from Fat 0**

In a large bowl combine the carrots, apple, celery, raisins, and lemon juice.

In a small bowl mix the yogurt and honey.

Add the yogurt dressing to the carrot mixture and mix well.

Total Fat 0 g *Cholesterol 0 mg*
Sodium 45 mg *Protein 3 g*
Total Carbohydrates 25 g *Fiber 3 g*

Follow the **DASH** meal plan (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension). For your free guide to the DASH eating plan go to:

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf

Talk to your healthcare provider for assistance on what lifestyle changes you can do to improve your blood pressure and your health.