High blood pressure, are you at risk?

During this holiday season, ProAct reminds you to be aware of your own health and to continue to make healthy choices. By knowing the risks, symptoms and causes of high blood pressure, we can be ProActive about our health going into the New Year.

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a condition in which the blood pressure in the arteries is elevated. This causes the heart to work harder than it should to pump blood to the rest of the body, leading to increased stress on your veins, arteries, and bodily organs. Hypertension is often one of the major factors that contributes to heart attacks, as well as the leading cause of strokes. Along with the risk of damaging vital organs within the body such as the brain and eyes, high blood pressure can cause a series of health conditions such as; Atherosclerosis, Heart Disease, Kidney Disease, Stroke, and Eye Disease. This disease affects millions of individuals, including children and teens.

Causes:

Many factors can lead to the development of high blood pressure. Some of these conditions include:

- Smoking
- Obesity
- Lack of physical activity
- Too much salt in the diet
- Alcohol
- Stress
- Genetics
- Age

Symptoms:

Most of the time there are no direct symptoms. For a majority of individuals, high blood pressure is found during their routine doctor visits. Due to the fact that there are no symptoms, people can begin to develop heart and/ or kidney problems without ever being aware that they have high blood pressure.
How is Blood Pressure Measured?

Blood pressure is measured in two numbers, systolic and diastolic pressure. Systolic pressure is the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats and fills the artery with blood. Diastolic pressure measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is at rest between beats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood Pressure Category</th>
<th>Systolic mm Hg (upper #)</th>
<th>Diastolic mm Hg (lower #)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>less than 120</td>
<td>less than 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prehypertension</td>
<td>120 – 139</td>
<td>or 80 – 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1</td>
<td>140 – 159</td>
<td>or 90 – 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2</td>
<td>160 or higher</td>
<td>or 100 or higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertensive Crisis (Emergency care needed)</td>
<td>Higher than 160</td>
<td>or Higher than 110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Treatment:

Living a healthy lifestyle is a critical factor in maintaining a healthy blood pressure. By eating healthier foods, reducing sodium intake, quitting smoking, limiting alcohol consumption and increasing daily exercise, one can help lower their chances of becoming someone with high blood pressure. In addition to lifestyle remedies, depending on the severity of hypertension, one can also begin a drug therapy regimen. Drugs such as ACE inhibitors, ARB medications, Beta blockers and Diuretics are all medications commonly used to treat hypertension. Please be sure to contact your physician to determine the appropriate treatment options.

For someone diagnosed with high blood pressure, it is important to see the doctor routinely. Even once your blood pressure goal has been reached, continuously monitoring your blood pressure is encouraged. Blood pressure is not something to only be monitored when you visit the doctor, many places such as drug stores and pharmacies have automatic blood pressure machines that are available to the public, that can help you monitor your blood pressure on a regular basis.

Wishing you a Happy and Healthy Holiday season, from our family, to yours.

Sincerely,

The ProAct team