



Let's Talk About...

Blood Pressure

We may know a lot about blood pressure and may have even been diagnosed with hypertension (High Blood Pressure or HBP). However, there may be a few of us out there who could be experiencing higher than normal blood pressure and not even know it.

High blood pressure often has no symptoms.

However, over time and if untreated, it can cause health conditions, such as heart disease and stroke.

So what can you do to prevent and know the signs and symptoms that your blood pressure may be increasing?

First, let's address the signs and symptoms.

High blood pressure is largely symptomless, which is why it's nicknamed the "silent killer." If you ignore your blood pressure because you think a certain symptom or sign will alert you to the problem, you are taking a dangerous chance with your life.

DO NOT attempt to diagnose yourself with HBP. Clinical diagnosis should only be made by a healthcare professional. Know your blood pressure and make changes that matter to protect your health.

The American Heart Association goes on to address a variety of symptoms that may be indirectly related to, but are NOT always caused by, high blood pressure:

Blood spots in the eyes: Blood spots in the eyes are more common in people with diabetes or high blood pressure, but neither condition causes blood spots. Floaters in the eyes are also not related to HBP.

However, an eye doctor may be able to detect damage to the optic nerve caused by untreated HBP.

Facial flushing: Facial flushing occurs when blood vessels in the face dilate. It can occur unpredictably or in response to certain triggers, emotional stress, exposure to heat or hot water, alcohol consumption and exercise — all of which can raise blood pressure temporarily.

Dizziness: While dizziness can be a side effect of some blood pressure medications, it is not caused by HBP. However, dizziness should not be ignored, especially if the onset is sudden. Sudden dizziness, loss of balance or coordination, and trouble walking are all warning signs of a stroke. HBP is a leading risk factor for stroke.

Next, let's address how to prevent high blood pressure.

There are a number of factors and variables that can put you at a greater risk for developing [high blood pressure](#). Understanding these factors can help you be more aware of how likely you are to develop HBP. Some risk factors like family history, age, gender, race, & chronic kidney disease are not preventable. However, there are many modifiable risk factors that you CAN control for better overall heart health!

Move your body. Physical activity is great for your heart and circulatory system in general, and blood pressure is no exception. Not getting enough physical activity as part of your lifestyle increases your risk of getting high blood pressure.

Variety in how you fuel your body. Good nutrition from a variety of sources is critical for your health. Our body can only manage so much salt and sodium. Consuming more than our body can handle can lead to high blood pressure. Whole, healthful foods can help lower blood pressure.

Weight. Carrying too much weight puts an extra strain on your heart and circulatory system that can cause serious health problems. It also increases your risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and HBP.

Regular, heavy use of alcohol can cause many health problems, including [heart failure](#), [stroke](#) and an irregular heartbeat. It can cause your blood pressure to increase dramatically and can also increase your risk of cancer, obesity, alcoholism, suicide and accidents.

Sleep. Sleep is always a good thing. Sleep apnea is something to be aware of when it comes to HBP. Obstructive [sleep apnea](#) may increase risk of developing HBP.

Cholesterol. More than half of people with HBP also have [high cholesterol](#).

Blood Sugar Levels/Diabetes. Most people with [diabetes](#) also develop HBP.

Smoking and tobacco use. Using tobacco can cause your blood pressure to temporarily increase and can contribute to damaged arteries.

Stress Too much stress may contribute to increased blood pressure. Also, stress can encourage behaviors that increase blood pressure, such as poor diet, physical inactivity, and using tobacco or drinking alcohol more than usual.

Bottom line...know your blood pressure, know and listen to your body, and take care of your heart health!



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MCARTHUR FAMILY YMCA | 1915 Citrona Drive | 904.261.1080 | DECEMBER 2024

DECEMBER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Events are free for members and require reservations (unless otherwise noted). Reservations can be made in our app and online at fcymca.org.

Board Games

Every Wednesday, 1:00 - 2:00pm, Lobby

Gather with your friends and join us in the studio for an array of board games. Have any board game requests? Reach out to Suzanne at SBlake@fcymca.org to make your requests or for more information.

Walking Group: Walk into Friday

Every Friday, 9:30 - 10:30am, Meet at the front of the Y Lobby

Walk the beautiful area of Amelia Park. Simply reach out to Suzanne at SBlake@fcymca.org to share your feedback!

Social: Cookie Exchange

Monday, December 16th, 12:30 - 1:30pm, Lobby

Come join us for a fun holiday cookie exchange! The McArthur Family YMCA will supply bags so you can bring cookies home, and we also will have fresh coffee available!

Cooking Demo with Feeding Northeast Florida

Thursday, December 12th 1:15 - 2:15pm, Studio B

Feeding Northeast Florida educators will be at the Y to present a food demonstration and provide information about healthy eating. Samples of foods prepared during the demonstration will be made available to participants.

DON'T FORGET YOUR 50 & BETTER PUNCH CARDS

Participate in the monthly **Age 50 & Better Rewards** drawing using your completed punch card, and you could win great prizes!