World Hypertension Day

Know Your Numbers

World Hypertension Day is celebrated every year on 17th of May to raise the public awareness about the hypertension, its preventive measures and complications. For the five-year period 2013-2018, the theme of WHD is ‘Know Your Numbers’ with the goal of increasing high blood pressure awareness in all populations around the world.

Though Hypertension affects more than one in three adults worldwide, it remains largely hidden. The number of people living with hypertension (high blood pressure) is predicted to be 1.56 billion worldwide by the year 2025.

Many people do not know they have high blood pressure because it does not always cause symptoms. As a result, it leads to more than nine million deaths every year, including about half of all deaths due to heart disease and stroke.

Arm yourself with the knowledge you need. Learn what your blood pressure numbers mean and protect yourself and those you love from the “silent killer’s” serious consequences.
What is hypertension (high blood pressure)?

Blood pressure is the force exerted by the blood against the walls of blood vessels, and the magnitude of this force depends on the cardiac output and the resistance of the blood vessels.

Hypertension is having a blood pressure higher than 139/89 mmHg, a definition shared by all the medical guidelines.

This means the systolic reading (the pressure as the heart pumps blood around the body) is over 139 mmHg (millimeters of mercury) or the diastolic reading (as the heart relaxes and refills with blood) is over 89 mmHg.

- Normal blood pressure is below 120 systolic and below 80 diastolic
- Prehypertension is 120-139 systolic or 80-89 diastolic
- Stage 1 hypertension is 140-159 systolic or 90-99 diastolic
- Stage 2 hypertension is 160 or higher systolic or 100 or higher diastolic
- Hypertensive crisis (a medical emergency) is when blood pressure is above 180 systolic or above 110 diastolic

Fast facts on hypertension

- Hypertension is a blood pressure higher than 139 over 89 mmHg (millimeters of mercury)
- One or both diastolic and systolic readings can be high
- Modern lifestyle factors are responsible for a growing burden of hypertension: physical inactivity, salt-rich diets with processed and fatty foods, and alcohol and tobacco use
- High blood pressure can be secondary to other conditions e.g. kidney disease
- Hypertension itself does not cause symptoms but in the long-term leads to complications caused by narrowing of blood vessels

Risk Factors Of Developing Hypertension

- Age - everyone is at greater risk of high blood pressure as they get older. Prevalence of hypertension is higher in people over 60 years of age
- Race – African adults are at higher risk than white or Hispanic American adults
- Size - being overweight or obese is a key risk factor
- Sex - men and women have different risk profiles. While they have the same lifetime risks, men are more prone at younger ages while women are more prone at older ages
- Lifestyle - as mentioned above, this is to blame for growing rates of hypertension, from greater uptakes of dietary salt, excessive alcohol and tobacco, low dietary potassium, and physical inactivity

Other risk factors are a family history of the disease and chronic stress.

What is Hypertension?

Hypertension is a condition called high blood pressure during which the arterial blood pressure raises to high level from the normal level (120/80 mmHg).

It is a medical condition called as silent killer as it does not show any clear symptoms however severe hypertension show some symptoms of headaches, sleepiness, palpitation, blurred vision, fatigue, dizziness, confusion, ringing sensation in the ears, breathing difficulty, irregular heartbeat which may lead to even coma.

It is divided in two types (primary or essential hypertension and secondary hypertension) on the basis of its causing factors. The primary hypertension is more common type however its causes are unknown. Whereas, causes of secondary hypertension are kidney damage, adrenal gland over-activity, sleep apnea syndrome, tumors, recreational drugs, thyroid gland dysfunctioning, aortic coarctation, pregnancy-related conditions, over or wrong medications, alcoholic drinks, bad food and etc.
Prevention of Hypertension

Symptoms of Hypertension
Most of the times high blood pressure has no symptoms. By the time they start showing, it is extremely high and the subsequent effects on the body have taken effect. They include:

- An enlarged or weakened heart, may fail to pump enough blood (heart failure)
- Aneurysm - an abnormal bulge in the wall of an artery
- Blood vessel narrowing - in the kidneys, leading to possible kidney failure; also in the heart, brain and legs, leading to potential heart attack, stroke or amputation, respectively
- Blood vessels in the eyes my rupture or bleed, leading to vision problems or blindness (hypertensive retinopathies)

WARNING SIGNS; Headaches, vision problems, nausea, and vomiting

Lifestyle Changes to Treat High Blood Pressure
A critical step in preventing and treating high blood pressure is a healthy lifestyle. You can lower your blood pressure with the following lifestyle changes:

- Losing weight if you are overweight or obese
- Eating a healthy; DASH-dietary approaches to stop hypertension; (more fruits, vegetables, low fat dairy products and less saturated fat)
- Reducing the amount of sodium in the diet to less than 1,500 milligrams a day if you have high blood pressure. Healthy adults should try to limit their sodium intake to no more 2,300 milligrams a day (about 1 teaspoon of salt)
- Getting regular aerobic exercise (such as brisk walking at least 30 minutes a day, several days a week)
- Limiting alcohol intake as much as possible and quitting smoking

These measures also enhance the effectiveness of high blood pressure drugs
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