



ChallengeME

MONTHLY MINUTE

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Monthly topic: **Heart Health**



February is American Heart Month, a time when all people can focus on their cardiovascular health. The Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention shines a light on hypertension (high blood pressure), a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Surprising facts about blood pressure:

1. **High blood pressure may be linked to dementia.** Evidence suggests that having uncontrolled high blood pressure during midlife (ages 44 to 66) creates a higher risk for dementia later in life.
2. **Young people can have high blood pressure too.** Nearly 1 in 4 adults aged 20 to 44 have high blood pressure. Experts think the increased risk for stroke in this age group is a direct result of the rising rates of obesity, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes—conditions that are preventable and treatable.
3. **High blood pressure usually doesn't have any symptoms.** High blood pressure is sometimes called the “silent killer.” Most people with high blood pressure don't have any symptoms. Because many people feel fine, they don't think they need to get their blood pressure checked.
4. **Women and African Americans face unique risks when it comes to high blood pressure.** African American men and women have higher rates of high BP than any other racial or ethnic group & more likely to be hospitalized for high blood pressure. Women with high BP and pregnant may experience complications.

Be sure to visit the ChallengeME website:

Sign up for Health Coaching:

Call: TTY: 800.697.0353 | Online: guidanceresources.com

WellStarME: wellstar@mcd.org | 207-620-9202

Health & Wellness Navigation Team

wellnessnavigator@mcd.org | 207-620-9209

For benefits questions, please contact Employee Health & Wellness:

(207) 624-7380 or 1-800-422-4503 TTY: dial Maine Relay 711 or visit <http://maine.gov/mdot/challengeme>



What Health Conditions Increase the Risk for Heart Disease

1. **High pressure**, if not controlled, can affect your heart and other major organs of your body, including your kidneys and brain.
2. **Unhealthy blood cholesterol levels.** If we take in more cholesterol than the body can use, the extra cholesterol can build up in the walls of the arteries, including those of the heart. This leads to narrowing of the arteries and can decrease the blood flow to the heart, brain, kidneys, and other parts of the body.
3. **Diabetes Mellitus.** Diabetes causes sugar to build up in the blood. If you have diabetes, your body doesn't make enough insulin, can't use its own insulin as well as it should, or both.
4. **Obesity.** Obesity is excess body fat. Obesity is linked to higher “bad” cholesterol and triglyceride levels and to lower “good” cholesterol levels. Obesity can lead to high blood pressure and diabetes as well as heart disease.

Prevent and Manage High Blood Pressure

1. Eat a healthy diet- DASH diet (<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/education/dash-eating-plan>) is Great to follow! Talk with your healthcare team about eating various foods rich in potassium, fiber, and protein and lower in salt (sodium) and saturated fat.
2. Maintain a healthy weight
3. Keep physically active
4. Limit the amount of alcohol you intake
5. Eliminate smoking
6. Get enough sleep

Why do we wear Red for heart disease?

On the first Friday of February (Feb. 3rd) is National Wear Red Day in the U.S. It's your chance to raise awareness for heart disease while also wearing your favorite red outfit!

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Coming up March: Nutrition Month

Comments, questions, ideas, or submissions?
Please email Janice.Arsenault@maine.gov