Healthy Living: High Blood Pressure

Linda B. Bobroff and Leigh Ann Martin

What is high blood pressure?
High blood pressure is increased pressure of blood on the blood vessels. This creates more work for the heart. Another name for high blood pressure is hypertension. Over 70 million Americans have hypertension and about half of them do not know that they have this health problem.

Hypertension can cause:
- Atherosclerosis (narrowing and hardening of blood vessels)
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Kidney failure
- Damage to the eyes

Check Your Risks
You are at higher risk of developing hypertension if you:
- are African American
- are a man
- are 45 years of age or older
- eat a high salt diet
- are overweight
- had a parent with hypertension
- drink large amounts of alcohol
- are not physically active

Take a Closer Look
In a normal artery there is room for blood to flow freely.

An artery with atherosclerosis has a build-up of plaque on the artery walls. Atherosclerosis can cause a heart attack or stroke.

Check Your Blood Pressure
Regular blood pressure check-ups help your doctor detect or monitor hypertension. Have your blood pressure checked by a health professional at least once a year. The ENAFS Keep Track of Your Blood Pressure log can help you monitor your blood pressure in between doctor visits.

1. La versión en español de este documento es Vida Saludable: Presión Sanguínea (FCS8599 espan). This document is FCS8599, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Originally developed with funding from the Florida Department of Elder Affairs in partnership with state, county, and local agencies, it was first published March 2004. Revised: October 2009.

2. Linda B. Bobroff, Ph.D., RD, LD/N, professor; Leigh Ann Martin, former ENAFS coordinator; Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences; University of Florida; Gainesville, FL 32611.