Your Health

New Guidelines for High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure or hypertension can lead to heart disease, kidney disease and stroke. Blood pressure can be unhealthy even if it stays only slightly above the normal level of less than 120/80 mmHg. A new classification of prehypertension has been added to include people whose blood pressure is higher than normal (<120/80), but not high enough to be classified as hypertension. New guidelines from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute recommend that people with prehypertension make healthy lifestyle changes that can help prevent them from developing high blood pressure.

You have high blood pressure if your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher. If either the top number (systolic) or the bottom number (diastolic) is in the hypertension category, you are classified as having hypertension. If you have diabetes or kidney disease, your blood pressure should be treated if it’s over 130/80.

**Blood Pressure Levels for Adults**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Systolic (top #)</th>
<th>Diastolic (bottom #)</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>80-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension*</td>
<td>140 or higher</td>
<td>90 or higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*130/80 if diabetes or kidney disease

Research has found that diet affects the development of high blood pressure. Studies have shown that blood pressure can be lowered by following an eating plan called the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan and by eating less salt or sodium. The DASH eating plan emphasizes fruits, vegetables,

People who followed the eating plan and ate less salt had the greatest reduction in blood pressure.
and low-fat dairy foods. It is reduced in red meat, sweets, and sugar-containing beverages. The eating plan is low in fat and cholesterol and high in magnesium, potassium, calcium and fiber. People who followed the eating plan and ate less salt had the greatest reduction in blood pressure.

Healthy lifestyle changes are now recommended for people with prehypertension to help prevent high blood pressure, but are beneficial for everyone. They include:

- **Lose weight if overweight.** Even a small amount of weight loss can lower blood pressure.
- **Follow the DASH eating plan.** Increase the number of servings of fruits and vegetables you eat each day to a goal of 8-10 servings/day. Limit meat, poultry and fish to no more than 6 oz/day. Eat 2-3 servings of lowfat or fat-free dairy foods each day.
- **Eat less salt and sodium.** Read labels and try to limit sodium to less than 2400 milligrams per day.
- **Be physically active at least 30 minutes each day.** Activities like brisk walking lower blood pressure even without weight loss.
- **Limit alcoholic drinks.** Drinking more than one alcoholic drink a day for women and two a day for men can increase blood pressure.

Studies show that a combination of the above lifestyle changes results in more improvement in blood pressures than making only one change. Don’t try to make too many lifestyle changes at one time. You’ll be more successful if you make one or two changes at a time.

Uncontrolled high blood pressure is a major problem in the U.S. It needs to be managed earlier and more aggressively. Lifestyle changes have been proven to help reduce blood pressure and prevent high blood pressure. If you’d like help in making lifestyle changes, talk with a registered dietitian or go to: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/index.htm for more detailed information on the DASH eating plan.

**Fruity Chicken Salad**

2 cups cubed cooked chicken breast
2 large ripe peaches, sliced
1/3 cup sliced seedless grapes
1/2 cup sliced strawberries
1/2 cup peach flavored fat-free yogurt
1/4 cup chopped pecans

Mix ingredients together and serve with lettuce leaf garnish.
Makes 4 servings.
Serving size: about 4 cups
Exchanges: 1 fruit, 2 lean meat
Nutrition information:
Calories: 175
Carbohydrate: 15 grams
Fat: 6 grams
Cholesterol: 36 grams
Sodium: 54 milligrams
Fiber: 1.9 grams

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Your Relationships
Happiness and the Retirement Transition

Today’s retirees are “seasoned citizens” – healthier, more energetic, and better educated than ever before. As the aging baby boom generation joins their ranks, the group of seasoned citizens will swell exponentially. New research indicates some interesting trends in the transition to retirement for boomers.

The traditional definition of “retirement” – as workers’ final exit from the labor force – is increasingly obsolete, as those in late midlife tend to move in and out of the workforce. Accordingly, retirement as a social institution is changing. It is no longer a one-way irreversible event capping a long career with years of leisure. Instead, retirement for many is becoming more a process, a blurred or fuzzy exit, taking place over a period of years as retirees move in and out of several less-demanding jobs.

Men and women have different patterns when it comes to retirement planning, the transition to retirement itself, and the factors that are linked to life quality in retirement. Men who have traditional careers spent with a single employer, for example, tend to plan earlier and retire earlier than women who have had a series of jobs over their working years.

The transition to retirement can be rocky for men and women. Retiring from one’s primary career job is linked to a downturn in marital quality for both men and women. Newly-retired men and women both report more marital conflict than either their not-yet-retired or fully-retired partners. Thus, it is not being retired but becoming retired that seems the most stressful for marriages.

When both husbands and wives move into retirement at about the same time, men, in particular, are much happier with their marriages. Once couples have been retired for at least two years, marital quality for both partners rebounds, suggesting reduced role strain as couples settle into a routine of retirement. But one’s lifestyle after retirement also shapes marital quality. For example, women become more satisfied in the marriage when either they or their husbands take on post-retirement jobs. Women report more marital conflict when their husbands retire and do not take on post-retirement jobs.

Marital quality drops the most, however, for couples in which only one spouse retires while the other remains
employed, especially when the husband retires first and the wife remains employed. The old story of the newly-retired husband being underfoot and upsetting his wife’s household routines may be true for many couples.

Once retired, higher quality of life for both men and women is linked to factors such as retiring according to plan, being in good health, living in a supportive community, and for men especially, having a post-retirement job.

Many couples consider only the economics of pensions and savings when making a retirement decision. As we live longer, healthier lives, it appears that jobs for seniors are an important factor in marital satisfaction as well.

Adapted from the Cornell Gerontology Research Institute, 2002.

**Your Resources**

**National “Do Not Call” Lists Stop Most But Not All Telemarketers**

Beginning July, 2003, Georgia consumers can sign up for the national “do not call” registry. Registration on the national list for five years is free. If you do not want to put your number on either registry, you can still prohibit telemarketers from calling by contacting each one individually and asking them to put you on that company’s “do not call” list.

Listing on the national “do not call” registry stops most, but not all, telemarketing calls. Political organizations, charities, telephone surveyors, and companies with which you have an existing relationship can still call.

Telemarketers calling to solicit charitable contributions are not covered by the registry and may still call. If you make a request to a specific charitable organization that they not call you, they are required to honor your request. If they call you again, they may be subject to a fine of up to $11,000.

Even if you are on the national “do not call” registry, a company with which you have an established business relationship may call you for up to 18 months after your last purchase or delivery from it, or your last payment to it, unless you ask the company not to call again. If you request not to be called and they subsequently call you again, they may be subject to a fine of up to $11,000.

You can register online now for the national “no call” registry. Visit http://www.donotcall.gov/ and follow the instructions. You can register up to three numbers at one time. You must provide an e-mail address to register. Minutes after registering, you should receive e-mails with additional instructions.

You can only register one phone
number each time you call the national “do not call” registry at 1-888-382-1222; for TTY, call 1-866-290-4236. You must call from the phone number you wish to register. Consumers who register now for the “do not call” registry should notice a reduction in telemarketing calls starting October 1, 2003.

Georgia consumers have recently been receiving calls from companies inviting them to pre-register or confirm your registration for the national “do not call” registry. If you receive one of these calls, you are the target of a scam. Web sites or phone solicitors that claim they can or will register a consumer’s name or phone number on the national list are probably a scam.

Don’t share your personal information if someone calls you claiming to represent a “do not call” registry, an organization to stop fraud, or even the Federal Trade Commission. If you get such a call, either hang up immediately or write down the caller’s organization and phone number and report it to the FTC as www.ftc.gov or 1-877-FTC-HELP, and the Georgia Governor’s Office of Consumer Affairs. Keep information about your bank accounts and credit cards to yourself – including the numbers – unless you know who you are dealing with. Never share your Social Security number with a person you don’t know.

Dear Friend:

SENIOR SENSE is a quarterly publication provided by your local county Extension Service office. It is prepared by Extension Family & Consumer Sciences specialists at The University of Georgia specifically for the educational needs of older Georgians.

Please contact your local Extension Service office for more information on these and related topics.

Contributors to this issue:

Janine Freeman, RD, LD, CDE, Extension Education Program Specialist
Don Bower, DPA, CFCS, Extension Human Development Specialist
Patrice Dollar, CFP, Extension Financial Management Specialist and Michael Rupured, M.S., Extension Financial Management Specialist

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Gale A. Buchanan, Dean and Director