

POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Health and Wellness Information for Members

Summer 2019



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High Blood Pressure-Stay in Control

Blood pressure measures the force of your blood as it moves through your veins. High blood pressure is when your blood pressure remains raised over time. It is also called hypertension. Many people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) have high blood pressure. Many people have this health problem and do not know they have it.

High blood pressure is called the "silent killer" because there are very few symptoms. Many people have this health problem and do not know they have it. Even without symptoms, hypertension makes heart attack or stroke much more likely.

Tips to Check your Blood Pressure at Home

One good way to control high blood pressure is to track it over time. Ask your doctor to prescribe a blood pressure monitor for you. This machine lets you take your own blood pressure in the comfort of your home. Here are some helpful hints to help make sure the blood pressure readings you get at home are as precise as those from your doctor:

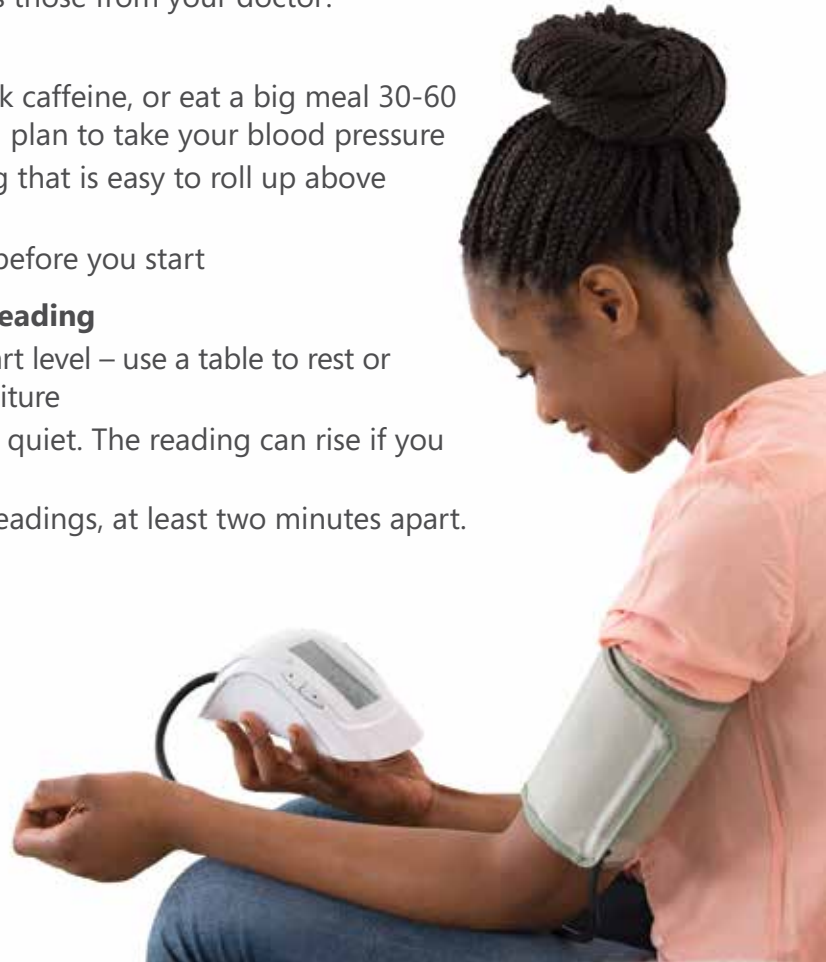
Before you begin

- Do not smoke, drink caffeine, or eat a big meal 30-60 minutes before you plan to take your blood pressure
- Wear loose clothing that is easy to roll up above the elbow
- Rest for 5 minutes before you start

When you take the reading

- Put your arm at heart level – use a table to rest or similar piece of furniture
- Relax Keep still and quiet. The reading can rise if you move or talk.
- Take two or more readings, at least two minutes apart.

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P.O. Box 46160, Los Angeles, CA 90046
Visit us 24/7 on the web
www.php-ga.org
Member Services
Mon - Fri, 8:00 am to 8:00 pm
(833) 267-6768
TTY: 711

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After you finish

- Write down your blood pressure in a book or journal with the date and time you checked your blood pressure
- You should have two numbers for each reading
- Bring the numbers with you to your next doctor visit

Try to check your blood pressure at home at different times in the day. See if it tends to be higher or lower in the morning, midday or evening. Bring your blood pressure monitor with you to your doctor visit to make sure the reading matches the one in the office.

The goal of you are trying to reach is anywhere from 120/80 to 139/89. If your blood pressure higher than 139/89, please ask your provider to retake your blood pressure. Talk to your primary care doctor about reaching this goal. Lower blood pressure is better.

Referral Process

Referrals Basics

Sometimes you need to see a doctor other than your primary care provider (PCP) for special health problems or tests. Your PCP will refer you to other doctors for special care. The doctors will need to be in your health plan's provider network.

Some referrals for tests and treatments must be approved by your health plan. These are prior-authorization referrals. There are set amounts of time the plan has to approve your doctor's referrals.

Step-by-Step Referral Process

- **Step 1:** Your doctor refers you to another doctor for a test or treatment
- **Step 2:** A Referral Coordinator at your clinic finds out if the service needs to be approved by your health plan first
- **Step 3:** The clinic sends the referral to your health plan for approval (if needed)
- **Step 4:** Your health plan has a set amount of time to approve or deny the service. This depends on the type of plan you have
 - Medicare: 14 days
 - Medi-Cal: 5 days
 - Medicaid: Varies by state
- **Step 5:** If it is the first time you will visit the new doctor (specialist), the plan will send you a letter and call to let you know if your referral was approved
- **Step 6:** Call the specialist's office and schedule a visit. Arrange all follow-up visits with the specialist's office.
 - Remind the specialist to forward your records to your PCP
 - Always check with your doctor to see how many follow-up visits are approved for that referral.

Only contact your health plan or your doctor's office if you think that the referral has passed the set amount of time allowed for your health plan.



Alcohol Addiction

Alcohol is an intoxicant and can depress the nervous system. Some research has been done on the effects of alcohol on HIV patients. It's shown that it is more harmful to them than among people who don't have the virus. Even those who are undetectable are at risk. One of the reasons alcohol and HIV have a bad link is because both produce a heightened state of inflammation. This can lead to many health issues, including heart problems.

You may have heard that regular to light drinking can be good for the heart. With heavy drinking, the benefits are outweighed by the risks, including:

Injuries. Drinking too much increases your chances of being injured or even killed. Alcohol is a factor in about 60% of fatal burns, drownings, and homicides. Also, 50% of severe trauma injuries and sexual assaults; and 40% of fatal motor vehicle crashes, suicides, and fatal falls.

Health problems. People who drink deeply have a greater risk of health problem. This includes liver disease, heart disease, sleep disorders, depression, stroke, and bleeding from the stomach. Also, sexually transmitted infections from unsafe sex and several types of cancer. They may have problems managing diabetes, high blood pressure, and other conditions.

Birth defects. Drinking during pregnancy can cause brain damage and other serious problems in the baby. It's not known if alcohol is safe for a developing baby. So women who are pregnant or may become pregnant should not drink.

Plan ahead to stay in control

The word "craving" refers to the thoughts or emotions that tempt you to drink more. You can crave it even though you have at least some desire not to. You may feel a pull in two directions or sense a loss of control.

Here are a few tips for craving alcohol

- Pace yourself. Sip slowly. Keep an eye on the clock and limit yourself to 1 drink an hour.
- Use drink "spacers"— nonalcoholic drinks between alcoholic ones.
- Try drinks with a lower alcohol content like light beer.
- Eat before or while you're drinking. Alcohol is absorbed into your system more slowly if you have food in your stomach.
- Have a quick, convincing "no thanks" ready if offered a drink at times when you don't want one. Any hesitation allows for second thoughts.

If you are having a very hard time with urges to drink alcohol after a few weeks, consult a doctor or therapist for support.



Summer Health Tips: Beat the Heat

As we age, it is important that we are more aware of the potential health risks that may occur due to both our age and the changing seasons. While people of all ages face health risks, seniors have more risks that need to be understood and monitored. Especially in the heat of the summer.

Here are some health tips as we head into the summer season:

1. Drink plenty of liquids. Make water your drink of choice. Drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of healthy liquids daily to stay hydrated. Talk to your doctor or a registered dietitian to determine the amount of water that's right for you every day.

2. Avoid caffeinated and alcoholic beverages. Alcohol, soda, coffee, sugary drinks and even tea can leave you dehydrated quickly. Reduce the amount of these beverages, especially during hot weather. Plain or flavored water is a good substitute.

3. Dress appropriately. Wear loose-fitting clothes in natural fabrics like cotton. Dress in light colors that will deflect the sun and heat instead of darker colors that will attract them.

4. Sunblock. When outdoors, protect your skin from damage by wearing hats, sunglasses and a sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher.

5. Stay indoors during extreme heat. In high heat and humidity, evaporation is slowed and the body must work extra hard to maintain a normal temperature.

6. Air conditioning. If you do not have air conditioning in your home, go somewhere that does. A movie theater, the mall, a friend or relative's home or a community senior center are all good options. Check to see if your city has "cooling centers" available.

7. Avoid extreme outdoor heat. If you need to get out of the house and don't drive, call a taxi, a friend or a transportation service. Do NOT wait for the bus in extreme heat.

8. Take a cool shower or bath. If you are absolutely unable to leave the house and do not have air conditioning, take a cool bath or shower to lower your body temperature on extremely hot days.

9. Signs of heat stroke. Know the signs of heat stroke (e.g. flushed face, high body temperature, headache, nausea, rapid pulse, dizziness and confusion). Take immediate action if you feel ill.

Who's At Risk?

According to the National Institute of Aging Health, lifestyle may raise the threat of a heat-related illness. These health factors may increase the risk for seniors:

1. Poor circulation and changes in the skin caused by normal aging
2. Heart, lung, and kidney diseases, as well as any illness that causes weakness or fever
3. High blood pressure or other conditions that require changes in diet. For example, people on low-salt diets may face an added risk.
4. The inability to perspire caused by some drugs, including diuretics, sedatives, tranquilizers, and certain heart and blood pressure medicines. Check with your doctor about any medications you are taking and their side effects.
5. Taking several drugs at once for various conditions; don't just stop taking them, talk with your doctor.
6. Being overweight or underweight
7. Drinking alcoholic beverages

Be aware of these important tips to be safe and keep cool. Check on aging friends, loved ones and other seniors residing in your neighborhood. Do what you can to beat the heat this summer!



Healthy and Safe Swimming

Pools, hot tubs/spas, and water playgrounds are great places to have fun, be active, or just relax. Learn how to stay healthy and safe when in the water this summer!

Swimming is one of the most popular sports activities in the United States. Just 2.5 hours of physical activity per week, including water-based activity, has health benefits, no matter our age.

As with any form of physical activity, we increase the health benefits when we each do our part to decrease the risks of illness and injury.

Swim Healthy, Be Healthy!

We can all help protect ourselves and our loved ones from germs by following a few simple steps.

Before getting in...

- Don't swim or let children swim if sick with diarrhea.
- Shower for at least 1 minute before you get into the water. This will remove most of the dirt and sweat on your body.

Once in...

- Don't swallow the water.
- Don't pee in the water.
- Take kids on bathroom breaks and check diapers every hour.

Prevent Injury

Staying safe in and around the water is important, too. Don't forget drowning prevention. Drowning is a leading cause of unintentional injury death among children 1–14 years old. In fact, drowning kills more young children 1–4 years old than anything else except birth defects. Swimmers can prevent drowning by learning swimming skills, by wearing life vests, and by swimming under the close supervision of parents, caregivers, or lifeguards who know cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Remember: Think Healthy. Swim Healthy. Be Healthy! This summer and year round!



You can also see the newsletter online @:

PHP Georgia: www.php-georgia.org/for-members/newsletters/

Retinal Eye Exams for Diabetes

Diabetes can harm your eyes. It can damage the small blood vessels in your retina, or the back of your eye. This condition is called diabetic retinopathy. Diabetes also increases your risk of glaucoma and other eye problems.

You may not know your eyes are harmed until the problem is very bad. Your doctor can catch problems early if you get regular eye exams. This is very important. The early stages of diabetic retinopathy may not cause changes in vision and you won't have symptoms. Only an eye exam can detect the problem. Take the steps to prevent the retinopathy from getting worse.



You Need Regular Retinal Eye Exams

Even if the doctor who takes care of your diabetes checks your eyes, you need a retinal eye exam every year by an eye doctor who takes care of people with diabetes. An eye doctor has equipment that can check the back of your eye much better than your regular doctor can.

If you have eye problems because of diabetes, you will probably see your eye doctor more often. You may need special treatment to prevent your eye problems from getting worse.

You may see two different types of eye doctors:

- An optometrist is a health care provider trained to diagnose and treat problems with your vision. Many can do screening exams for damage from diabetes. Once you have eye disease caused by diabetes, you need to see an ophthalmologist.
- An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor who is an eye specialist trained to diagnose and treat eye problems.

If you are diabetic and have any questions about your retinal eye exam please contact your PCP or RNCM.

Memory & Aging: Exercise Powers the Brain

Forgetfulness is a normal complaint among older adults. You can keep your brain sharp and prevent memory loss. Help your brain produce new brain cells at any age with exercise.

Exercise helps to keep you healthy. It also helps the brain to think and remember. This is because exercise promotes blood flow in the brain.

One study looked at seniors who exercised 40 minutes a day for three days a week. They did better in memory tests than seniors who hadn't exercised. And after a year of exercise, the part of the brain involved with memory had grown.

If you haven't been active before, you can begin any time. Start slowly and work up to 15 minutes of brisk activity each week. Do something that gets your heart to beat faster; Walking, swimming, biking and dancing are all good choices.

Want more reasons to get moving? Exercise also helps prevent stroke. It reduces the risk of diabetes.

It lowers blood pressure and stress. And, it helps your balance. So give your body and your brain the power they need. Start getting active today and follow these tips to help prevent memory loss:

- Exercise at least five days each week.
- Stay social to activate your mind.
- Reduce stress.
- Sleep well, at least seven to nine hours each night.
- Eat a well-balanced and healthy diet.

And if you have any questions about your brain health or mind, be sure to ask your doctor.



June is Men's Health Month

PHP/PHC encourages all members to make health a priority, but during Men's Health Month we especially want men to see their doctor for a health exam and screenings. Depression and heart disease affect millions of men—and many experience both.

What is the connection between heart disease and depression?

Depression that lasts longer than a couple of weeks can lead to behaviors, such as abusing alcohol or not sleeping well, that put heart health at risk. People with depression are more likely to have other conditions that can lead to heart disease, including obesity and diabetes.

How do they affect men?

Although both men and women can get depressed, men often have different symptoms than women, including feeling angry, acting aggressively, abusing drugs or alcohol, and having trouble sleeping. These symptoms can put men at risk for heart conditions by raising blood pressure and putting extra stress on the heart.



For good mental and heart health throughout your life, try these steps:

- Stay physically active. Being active boosts your mood and keeps your blood vessels healthy. Exercise may be as effective as medicine in reducing symptoms of depression.
- Watch what you eat and drink. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and veggies. Avoid caffeine, foods high in sodium (salt) and alcohol.
- Do not smoke. Tobacco is linked to both depression and heart disease. If you do smoke, learn how to quit.
- Get support from loved ones. Talk to trusted family or friends about what you are feeling. Loved ones can help by being exercise partners or reminding you to take your medicines.
- See a professional. If you have depression, talk to a mental health professional about treatment. If you have been diagnosed with a heart condition, talk to your doctor about medicines and healthy living habits that can help both your heart and your mental health.

Take care of your health, this month and every month! If you need more information, please call Member Services at (833) 267-6768. If you have a medical emergency and need help right away, dial 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

Source: cdc.gov

Prevention Points

At AIDS Healthcare Foundation, preventive care has always been an essential part of your health plan. Preventive services include immunizations and screenings to detect possible diseases and help you stay well. Prevention is about staying healthy and preventing or delaying disease. **Some key preventative screenings include:**

- ✓ Blood pressure screening for all adults
- ✓ Cholesterol screening
- ✓ Colorectal cancer screening for adults over 50
- ✓ Type 2 diabetes screening for adults with high blood pressure
- ✓ Mammograms every one to two years for women over 40
- ✓ Cervical cancer screening for sexually active women
- ✓ Osteoporosis screening for women over 60, depending on risk factors
- ✓ Immunizations for children from birth to 18 years
- ✓ Obesity screening and counseling for children



A Message from Your Health Plan

Your Contact Information

PHP Georgia cares about you and your health. We need to know if you moved or got a new phone number. Please call Member Services to update your record any time you make a change.

Member Services

Monday-Friday 8:00 am-8:00 pm • Georgia: (833) 267-6768

Medication Therapy Management Program (MTMP)

As part of PHP GA, you are enrolled in the MTMP. This Program helps people who take many prescribed meds. The Program lowers the chance of mistakes and reactions with your meds.

Your health care team will be in touch with you and your doctor. They will explain the drugs that you take. Your doctor will know of safety issues with your meds. Any other health issues will also be handled. Your RN Care Manager will contact you to make an action plan for your meds. An action plan with your nurse care manager will help with any problems you may have. The action plan will let you know just how and when to take your meds.

Drug Safety

Certain meds can be risky for older people. Find a list of high-risk meds and safe treatment options on our website under Prescription Medications.

PHP GA: www.php-ga.org/for-members/education

Compliance Hotline

Help us look out for Medicare fraud and abuse. For example, if your Explanation of Benefits lists charges that are wrong, call Member Services. Call our Compliance Hotline if you suspect possible fraud or abuse.

Compliance Hotline: (800) AIDS-HIV • (800) 243-7448

Special Needs

We know many of our members have special needs that make it hard to communicate with their healthcare team or Health Plan. Tell the doctor, nurse care manager or other member of your health home team if English is the not language you speak. We can call an interpreter who speaks your language. If you are deaf, hard-of-hearing or have other special needs, we can arrange a service to help us communicate with you. For your health, it is vital that you and your doctor or healthcare team understand each other. This service is free to you.



ATTENTION: This information is available for free in other languages. Please contact our customer service number at (800) 263-0067, 8:00 am -8:00 pm, seven days a week. (TTY: 711)

ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-800-263-0067, 8:00 am -8:00 pm, los siete días de la semana. (TTY: 711)

Questions?

Contact Your RN Care Manager

Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5:30pm • (833) 267-6768

Urgent After-Hours Nurse Advice Line

Mon-Fri, 5:30 pm-8:30 am and 24 hours on Weekends. Available 365 days a year. (800) 797-1717

24 Hour Pharmacy Customer Service

(833) 267-6769

