What is Hypertension? Why is it important to control High Blood Pressure?

Hypertension is a common medical problem in the U.S. It is estimated that one-third of adults have hypertension. Many who have it are unaware that they have it. Long-term, prolonged high blood pressure puts added stress on the heart and arteries. A person with years of uncontrolled high blood pressure often has an enlarged heart and thickened walls of the arteries. Prolonged uncontrolled hypertension can lead to stroke, congestive heart failure, kidney failure, blindness and other illnesses. Hypertension is commonly seen with diabetes in what is termed "metabolic syndrome." The combination can increase risk of stroke, heart failure, peripheral vascular disease, kidney failure and blindness.

Risk factors for hypertension include being overweight or obese, a sedentary lifestyle, and a diet high in salt and excess alcohol intake. Some families also tend to have a history of hypertension, indicating that there is a genetic component as well as an environmental component.

Blood pressure is most commonly measured with a blood pressure cuff placed around the upper arm. It is given as two numbers that are the measure of the weight of a tube of mercury. The units are millimeters mercury or mmHg. The higher number, or the systolic, is the pressure in the area measured when the heart beats or contracts, and the lower number, or diastolic, is the pressure when the heart relaxes after the heartbeat. Blood pressure changes throughout the day. When a person is exercising or under stress, it can go up. When someone is relaxing, it can go down. Similarly, blood pressure can vary when a person is lying in bed, sitting or standing. Most people occasionally feel a bit light-headed for a moment when they stand up. This is because of the blood pressure dropping when standing. Symptoms are relieved a few seconds later when the pressure rises to more normal levels.

Averaging two or more properly measured readings at each of two or more visits, a normal blood pressure is a systolic less than 120 mmHg and a diastolic less than 80 mmHg. A category called "Pre-hypertension" is defined as a systolic of 120 to 139 mmHg or a diastolic of 80 to 89 mmHg.

Stage 1 or early hypertension is defined as a systolic of 140 to 159 mmHg or a diastolic of 90 to 99 mmHg. Stage 2 or more severe hypertension is a systolic greater than or equal to 160 or a diastolic of greater than or equal to 100 mmHg. Malignant hypertension is defined as a diastolic blood pressure of 120 mmHg or having evidence of acute organ damage such as swelling in the back of the eye. These patients are usually treated to get the pressure down quickly. For asymptomatic patients who have no evidence of acute damage to the eyes, brain, heart or kidney, there is no proven benefit from rapid reduction in blood pressure. It may even be harmful.

For more information, refer to our Health Literacy website, at www.epcc.edu/health and click on Health Literacy field under patient education. http://start.epcc.edu/health/Navigation/Health_Literacy/PatientEducation.aspx

Source: cnnhealth.com
Women: Eliminate Heart Attack Risk by Nearly 90 Percent

Job stress and worrying about job security can both take a toll on a woman's body, although the two issues affect female health differently, according to research presented last month at the American Heart Association's Annual Meeting in Chicago. But whether chronic work-related stress is eating at your nerves or ballooning your waistline, there are natural solutions with no toxic side effects that you can use to relax the pressure.

The details: In a recent study looking at work stress and women, researchers from Harvard and Brigham and Women's Hospital studied more than 17,000 otherwise healthy women (generally in their 50s) enrolled in the Women's Health Study for 10 years. Women who reported work-related strain, such as having little or no authority over decisions or being unable to contribute creativity and skills to the job, were up to 88 percent more likely to experience a heart attack than women who reported no work strain. Overall, working women reporting high job strain faced a 40 percent higher rate of cardiovascular disease, too.

Worrying about losing a job did not appear to increase heart attack risk, but it was linked to obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, all of which can eventually lead to cardiovascular disease.

What it means: Whether it's a nightmarish cubicle neighbor, an unrelenting workload, or an ornery boss that has your stress meter ready to pop at any second, you can get a grip: It's all about mind over matter. An August study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that students taking part in Integrative Body-Mind Training (IBMT) enjoyed changes in white brain matter (within 11 hours of practice) that seemed connected to better regulation of emotions and behavior.

Although not very common in the U.S. yet, IBMT involves the practice of maintaining a state of restful alertness to tap into body-mind awareness while a trained coach guides your breathing and mental imagery. It's somewhat similar to more widely available mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), which involves focusing on your present-moment thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental way. MBSR has been shown to help people make clearer decisions in times of crisis, which could help when all health breaks loose at the office. Here's how to lower your stress levels without turning to meds.

Get your daily IBMT.

Previous research out of the University of Oregon and three Chinese institutes has found that you could adopt stress-zapping properties of IBMT before the work weeks out. After practicing it for 20 minutes a day for five days in a row, participants reported reduced stress and increased energy. Prevention suggests this intro IBMT exercise: Sit quietly in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and think of your mind as a full cup; as thoughts come and go, keep returning to an image of the cup becoming empty. Repeat for five minutes.

Regardless of your meditation style, know this: Compared to non-meditators, women who practice meditation enjoy up to a 66 percent drop in stress hormone levels, which can dramatically improve heart health.

Pop a piece of gum.

If you're in need of an emergency quick freak-out fix, reach for a piece of gum. (Avoid artificial sweetened gum, though — some are linked to health issues.) One study found that chewing gum boosts blood flow to the brain by up to 40 percent, helping you stay calm and in the present. This prevents you from ruminating over some aggravating office event.

Source: Rodale.com, 2011
Best fast-food under 350 calories

There are many reasons: We've added extra calories to basic foods, everything from pasta sauce to ketchup. We're drinking more calories than ever—450 a day, on average. And, of course, we've been trained to supersize it. Those "value" meals we order through the clown's mouth cost us only 17 percent more money, but 73 percent more calories. That's dummy economics—you wouldn't buy a new Blu-Ray Disc and then pay the electronics store to throw in some old, worn-out videotapes, would you? And so, everytime we eat out, we add 134 calories to our daily intake.

It is understood that life is hectic and fast-food meals are inevitable. You can eat all the foods you love, at all the restaurants you love, without condemning yourself to massive portions and coma-inducing calorie counts, and lose tons of weight—without ever dieting again.

Panda Express Mongolian Beef and Mixed Veggies
235 calories
7 g fat
(1.5 g saturated)
1,260 mg sodium

Panda actually has several options that come in below the 350-calorie mark. As with any Chinese meal, the key is skipping the greasy mound of fried rice and the oily tangle of noodles. Pair a low-calorie entree such as the Mongolian Beef or Green Bean Chicken with a side of veggies and you wind up with a fairly nutritious meal with plenty of protein to keep you full. Entrees to avoid: Beijing Beef, Orange Chicken, Sweet and Sour Chicken, and anything with pork.

Subway 6” Turkey Breast and Black Forest Ham Sandwich
(on 9-grain wheat bread with tomatoes, onions, green peppers, pickles, olives, and mustard)
310 calories
4 g fat (1 g saturated)
1,255 mg sodium

The health halo surrounding Subway is a boon for the sandwich chain, but for everyone else, it’s quite problematic. The numbers Subway advertises are only for a 6-inch sub and don’t account for cheese, mayo, olive oil, or any extras most people get on their sub. Order a 12-inch sandwich with a couple of extras and your “healthy” sub suddenly becomes an 800-calorie, diet-sinking torpedo. To be fair, though, there are many nutritious sandwich combinations at Subway, and this is one of them. Just make sure go with 6 inches (not 12), mustard (not mayo), and take advantage of Subway’s best option: unlimited veggies.

Chick-fil-A Nuggets (8 ct) with Barbecue Sauce
315 calories
12 g fat (2.5 saturated)
1,170 mg sodium

When it comes to healthy fast-food chicken, Chick-fil-A definitely rules the roost. Lately, though, we’ve seen sodium and calorie counts starting to creep upward, so we’ll be keeping a sharp eye on the chain this year. This 8-count meal is packed with 28 grams of hunger-blasting protein—a perfect way to refuel for lunch. Just say no to the Polynesian dipping sauce. One tub contains 110 calories!

(continued)
Best fast-food under 350 calories (cont.)

McDonald’s Grilled Honey Mustard Snack Wrap and Side Salad with Newman’s Own Low Fat Balsamic Vinaigrette

320 calories
12 g fat
(3.5 saturated)
1,540 mg sodium

You’d be hard-pressed to find a healthier wrap at any other major fast-food chain. This one contains only five ingredients: grilled chicken breast, flour tortilla, jack and cheddar cheese, lettuce, and honey mustard. That’s the kind of ingredient list we like to see: simple and delicious. Tack on a side salad and you’ve got a well-rounded meal with fewer calories than one Double Cheeseburger.

Burger King Jr. Whopper w/o Mayo and BK Apple Fries

330 calories
10.5 g fat (4 g saturated)
500 mg sodium

Burger King holds the dubious distinction of being the unhealthiest of the Big Three burger joints, but that doesn’t mean you can’t concoct a decent meal. By simply 86-ing the mayo, the Whopper Jr. becomes one of the healthiest burgers in the fast-food kingdom, and BK’s fresh apple fries are a delicious and nutritious side. Warning: Every other Whopper sandwich has anywhere from 0.5 grams to 2.5 grams of Trans fat.

Fresco Chicken Soft Tacos (2)

340 calories
8 g fat (2 g saturated)
1,360 mg sodium

Taco Bell got a lot of flak this past year for advertising its Drive-Thru Diet, but truth is, this taco joint provides dozens of possible meal combos for less than 500 calories. The same certainly can’t be said for any of the nation’s most popular fast-food burger chains. Taco Bell’s menu still has plenty of pitfalls, so order wisely. Our advice: 1) Stick to the Fresco Menu, where not one item is more than 350 calories; 2) Run from Grilled Stuff Burritos, food served in a bowl, and anything with multiple layers.

Dunkin’ Donuts Egg White and Cheese Breakfast Wake-Up Wraps (2) w/ Small Black Coffee

305 calories
14 g fat (6 g saturated)
965 mg sodium

Dunkin’ might be known for its donuts, but the DDSmart Menu is the real reason to swing by this spot on your way to work. A couple of Wake-Up Wraps and a small black coffee will give you exactly what you need to stay energized through the morning. This meal delivers 16 grams of hunger-fighting protein. You definitely won’t find that in two glazed donuts.

Source: Yahoo Health