

Supporting Your Loved One with High Blood Pressure



Having the support of a friend or family member sometimes is the deciding factor for an individual struggling to manage and control high blood pressure successfully. You can make a difference.

Of the 67 million American adults who have high blood pressure, 16 million are aware they have the condition and are receiving treatment, but their blood pressure continues to be high. If this sounds like someone you know and love, team up to help him or her to make blood pressure control **your** goal, too.

Here are tips on how you can help:

Start the conversation

Find out what your loved one is already doing to control their high blood pressure and what you can do to support them immediately. Ask questions like:

- ▶ What is hardest for you about controlling your high blood pressure?
- ▶ What is easiest?
- ▶ Have you set specific goals with your health care team?
- ▶ What can I do to help you? This might include: go with you to health care visits; help you monitor your blood pressure; remind you to take your medications; work together to cook low-sodium meals.

Provide emotional support

- ▶ Be positive. Help your loved one remember that this is a marathon, not a sprint, and that control is possible.
- ▶ If you are concerned about your loved one, ask him or her questions.
- ▶ Don't forget to take care of yourself. As a family member or friend taking care of a loved one with high blood pressure, you may experience periods of stress, anxiety, depression, and frustration. Remember, taking care of your own emotional health and physical needs helps you take care of your loved one.

Did you know?

African Americans have a higher chance of being diagnosed with high blood pressure, which puts them at higher risk of dying from cardiovascular disease.

About 2 of every 5 African Americans have high blood pressure, and fewer than half of them have it under control.



Make control *your* goal

Take action to help your loved one make healthy lifestyle changes for better blood pressure control. For example, you can:

- ▶ Help your loved one set up a routine to take medications regularly.
 - ▷ If your loved one's insurance provides mail order delivery, set it up and request a 90-day supply of medications.
 - ▷ If this service is not available, pick a convenient pharmacy to get all of the medications. Request that refills occur at the same time each month so your loved one can pick them all up at once.
 - ▷ Start a reminder system. Use a pillbox for every pill, every day. Or find and use a smartphone app.
- ▶ Set a reminder to get your loved one's blood pressure checked—at home, at the doctor's office, or at a pharmacy. Track results in a journal or diary that your loved one can take to health care visits.
- ▶ Help your loved one eat better.
 - ▷ Go grocery shopping together. Focus on more fresh fruit, vegetables, and whole grains and fewer prepared foods that have high sodium, cholesterol, saturated fat, and trans fat.
 - ▷ Help cook healthy, tasty meals at home more often. Bring home-cooked meals to your loved one.
- ▶ About 1 in 5 African American adults smokes cigarettes. If your loved one smokes, help him or her quit.
 - ▷ Help your loved one identify reasons to quit.
 - ▷ Learn about and improve upon your loved one's previous attempts to quit.
 - ▷ Suggest a quit line like 1-800-QUIT-NOW.
- ▶ Be more active with your loved one.
 - ▷ Schedule easy exercises into your daily or weekly get-togethers—even just a walk around the block is enough to get the ball rolling.
 - ▷ Keep track of your daily and weekly physical activity by using a log or diary.
 - ▷ Increase the time and intensity of your physical activity gradually as you progress.

Find and download additional materials to support loved ones in controlling high blood pressure at the **Million Hearts®** website.

Be positive. Help your loved one remember that this is a marathon, not a sprint, and that control is possible.

Million Hearts® is a national initiative to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. It is led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, two agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services.

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