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Blood Pressure Awareness

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Blood Pressure Awareness Challenge

During the blood pressure challenge, I encourage people to check their blood pressure regularly, even if it has always been normal and you have no concerns. I would like to provide an example as to why this is so important. I have always had normal blood pressure, and, although it runs in my family, my numbers were always normal, except for an occasional higher reading. Over the past year or so, I noticed my higher readings were a little higher, and they occurred a little more often. Still, they weren't too concerning to me, after all I eat healthy (could do better), I exercise (could do better), and I teach Tai Chi (teaching is different than doing).

Over the years, I have also endured the bad habit of burning my candle at both ends, times 4. My mind usually goes in 12 different directions as I try to juggle 4 or 5 or 6 things. That is, until today.

Within the past month or so, while juggling even more things than usual with an occasional crisis thrown in for good measure, I noticed my higher readings were now 155/97. However, it was coffee, my head hurt, and I would check it again later when I got the chance. On the occasions I did check my blood pressure, although it would be lower, it wasn't low enough to be good- and that 155 / 97 seemed to be a lot more common. But, my back hurt, I had a cold, and I had too much coffee, and it would probably go down when I got home.

Last Thursday, my blood pressure started at 155 / 97. Within a few hours it was down, but still considered high. By the afternoon, it was back up to 155 / 97. That evening at home, I had consistent readings of 170/100...and with each measurement I became more nervous until finally I had no choice but to go to the emergency room to have it checked. (If you could see the timeline of stressful life situations happening alongside, it would be clear why).

There I was lying in a hospital ER bed with a cuff strapped to my arm. The doctor checked for signs of stroke, kidney damage, and heart attack. I watched as my husband paced nervously, and I talked to my kids (one at home, one away at college) reassuring them that I was doing fine, all the while wondering if I would end up going home or on a helicopter.

After learning the only thing the tests showed was my potassium was a little low, I was able to go home. Now I am on a strict regimen of taking a medication, monitoring my blood pressure, and weeding out everything from my head not necessary- oh, and putting all but 1 end of my candle out. Now, my blood pressure is leveling off and I feel much better. I am certain I would have had to begin medication and do all this stuff anyway by closely watching my blood pressure and taking it more seriously. The thing is, I didn't. I barreled through life believing I would be fine, not taking time to acknowledge the seriousness of the signs I saw in front of me. I ended up with blood pressure that could have caused some major damage and a family worried sick. I may not have been able to prevent having high blood pressure, but I could have prevented this.

So, please monitor your blood pressure. An *occasional* higher reading is nothing to be too concerned about, but if higher is your new normal, and your highest blood pressure reading increases and becomes more common, please go see your doctor!

If you happen to take at least 15 readings now through Nov. 22, you could win won of 3 prizes drawings for the Blood Pressure Awareness Challenge! (My prize: NOT taking a helicopter ride!)



Activity OR Blood Pressure Log

- Physical Activity: On the calendar below, record your physical activity in minutes, steps, or miles and record the total after each week to figure your monthly grand total. OR
- Blood Pressure: Take your blood pressure at least once per week and record it on the calendar below. See the activity and blood pressure charts below to check your category.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
NOVEMBER	 Happy Thanksgiving				1	2	Total
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Total
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Total
							<u>Grand Total:</u>

F.Y.I.

During the blood pressure challenge, I encourage all participants to log their blood pressure, which can be recorded on the calendar above or recorded on a blood pressure log posted under the *Blood Pressure* tab. By logging your blood pressure at least 15 times during the challenge, not only will it give you a good idea where your blood pressure level is, but it will also make you eligible to win one of 3 prize drawings! You can use your own cuff at home or work, one at a store or pharmacy, or have Penny or a medical professional take your reading.

I am happy to still accept physical activity logs as credit for participation too!

While it is normal for blood pressure to be higher than normal every once in a while, if your blood pressure is consistently in the:

- Stage 1 Category: speak with your doctor.
- Stage 2 Category: See your doctor ASAP
- Crisis Category: Seek medical attention immediately

* BP Category

Normal
less than 120
less than 80

Elevated
120-129
less than 80

Stage 1
130-139
80-89

Stage 2
140 or higher
90 or higher

EMERGENCY
Higher than 180
Higher than 120

* New 2017 Standards