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## Information for Behavioral Health Providers in Primary Care

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# Hypertension

### Hypertension Information Sheet for BHPs

- Hypertension (HTN) is another name for high blood pressure
- Untreated HTN can lead to heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, and vision problems
- Only 1/4 of an estimated 42 million people with HTN in the U.S. adequately control their blood pressure

#### What Is Blood Pressure?

- The force of blood pushing against the walls of the blood vessels as blood flows throughout the body
- Blood pressure (BP) is noted with two measurements, for example, 130/70 “One Thirty Over Seventy”
  - The top number, systolic BP, is the pressure when the heart beats
  - The bottom number, diastolic BP, is the pressure when the heart rests

#### What Is High Blood Pressure?

- A serious medical condition that occurs when BP is consistently elevated (systolic BP of 140 or higher and/or diastolic BP of 90 or higher)
- Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80
- BP varies during the day, depending on level of activity, stress, etc. Hypertension occurs when BP remains elevated
- Hypertension results from a narrowing of the blood vessels where the heart is forced to work harder to pump blood throughout the body. Blood can clot in the vessel because of the narrow opening

#### Health Problems Associated with Hypertension

- Atherosclerosis – High cholesterol
- kidney disease
- Heart failure
- Stroke

## Hypertension (Continued)

- Eye disease

### Symptoms of Hypertension

- Hypertension generally has no symptoms until uncontrolled high BP has damaged the body

### Things You Can Encourage Patients To Do To Help Control Their Blood Pressure

- Eat a healthy diet that is low in salt and fat
- Stay active and exercise regularly
- Take medications according to their health care provider's instructions
- Limit alcohol intake
- Lose weight if overweight
- Not smoke
- Know what their target BP should be and have a plan to keep it at that level
- Learn and practice ways to reduce stress; strategies include:
  - Relaxation/distraction techniques (abdominal breathing, muscle relaxation, listening to music, spending time in nature)
  - Pleasant activity planning (build some fun into routine, seeking support and the company of family and friends)
  - Challenging negative thinking (learn to look at situations differently and develop more adaptive ways of thinking)

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