
Information for Behavioral Health Providers in Primary Care

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 ¼ 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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