

## Announcement

### National High Blood Pressure Education Month — May 2016

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month. High blood pressure (hypertension) is a major contributor to heart disease and stroke, two leading causes of death in the United States.\* High blood pressure affects one third of U.S. adults, or approximately 75 million persons, yet approximately 11 million of these persons are not aware they have hypertension, and approximately 18 million are not being treated (unpublished data) (1,2).

Certain groups are at increased risk for hypertension, including minorities and some women. In the United States, African-American men and women have higher rates of hypertension than any other race or ethnicity (3), and they are also more likely to be hospitalized for hypertension. Women with high blood pressure who become pregnant are more likely to have complications during pregnancy than are women with normal blood pressure (4). Hypertension can harm the mother's kidneys and other organs, and it can cause low birthweight and early delivery. Certain types of hormonal birth control can also raise a woman's risk for high blood pressure (5).

Hypertension affects persons of all ages: approximately one in four men and nearly one in five women aged 35–44 years have hypertension (3). New research also indicates that having uncontrolled high blood pressure during midlife (aged 45–65 years) increases the risk for dementia later in life (6,7). Vascular dementia—one of the most common types of dementia—is usually caused by the impact of multiple strokes over time, including small “silent” strokes that occur unnoticed. Hypertension is the main cause of these strokes (6,7).

Most persons with uncontrolled hypertension have health insurance (82%) and see their providers at least twice a year (62%), but their hypertension remains undiagnosed (8). An

important goal of the Million Hearts initiative is to equip health care providers with evidence-based tools and resources to identify and connect with these patients with undiagnosed hypertension.

In recognition of National High Blood Pressure Education Month, CDC and Million Hearts urge patients and health care professionals to learn more about the risks for high blood pressure at any age and encourage health care professionals to take steps to identify and treat patients with undiagnosed hypertension. Health care professionals can take advantage of evidence-based strategies and interactive tools and resources at <http://millionhearts.hhs.gov>. Additional information about hypertension is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure>.

#### References

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\* <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/heart-disease-and-stroke>.