

May is Women's Health Month and American Stroke Month

Dr. Christy Clayton, a retired OB/GYN says, "Ladies take care of everybody, but not themselves. The time is now! Let us start taking care of ourselves. This month serves as a reminder that we as women should make health a priority and build positive health habits for life."

Women's Health Month is observed annually in May. The goal is to empower women in such a way that they can make health a priority. It also equips women with the knowledge to help other women on their journeys to improve their health. With the efforts of individuals and healthcare workers, every woman can live a healthy and happy life.

Caught in the rigorous demands of work and family, women often forego an active lifestyle and a healthy diet to keep up with these demands. However, the consequences of neglecting health can be dire. When women fail to take care of their health, hereditary illnesses may afflict them sooner and with more severity. A sedentary lifestyle may also result in illnesses that can be avoided with a good lifestyle. With a growing focus on personal health, it is extremely important for all women and girls, especially those with underlying health conditions like hypertension, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, and women 65 years and older, to take care of their health. Taking care of yourself and your loved ones should always be a top priority.

During Women's Health Care Month get in touch with your doctors for a full-body medical check-up and the steps you need to take to treat an ailment. Timely medical intervention will not only save your health from deteriorating further but also detect illnesses that you may have overlooked.

National Women's Health Week (NWHW) is observed May 12–18, 2024. NWHW is a reminder for women of all ages to prioritize their health. This year's theme is **Know Your Bones**. It is designed to empower women to take charge of their bone health, including preventing and managing **osteoporosis**. It's never too early or too late to protect your bone health. Bone health is often overlooked until problems arise. While anyone can get **osteoporosis**—a disease that causes very weak bones that break easily—it is about four times more common in women than men.

This National Women's Health Week says learn steps you can take steps to improve your overall physical and mental health:

- ❖ Get regular checkups, including your annual well visit. Talk to your health care provider about any health concerns you have.
- ❖ Get active.
- ❖ Eat a heart healthy and balanced diet.
- ❖ Prioritize your mental health and learn how to cope with stress.
- ❖ Practice healthy behaviors, including limiting alcohol intake and improving/getting quality sleep.

Stroke - A stroke, sometimes called a brain attack, occurs when something blocks blood supply to part of the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. In either case, parts of the brain become damaged or die. A stroke can cause lasting brain damage, long-term disability, or even death and is the leading cause of long-term disability illness in the US. More women have strokes than men and more women die from strokes. Symptoms of a stroke are face drooping, arm pain radiating down to fingers and slurred speech.

There are two types of stroke: **Ischemic** stroke and **Hemorrhagic** stroke. An **Ischemic stroke** occurs when blood clots or other particles block the blood vessels to the brain. Fatty deposits called plaque can also cause

blockages by building up in the blood vessels. A **Hemorrhagic stroke** - happens when an artery in the brain leaks blood or ruptures (breaks open). The leaked blood puts too much pressure on brain cells, which damages them. High blood pressure and aneurysms—balloon-like bulges in an artery that can stretch and burst—are examples of conditions that can cause a hemorrhagic stroke.

Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA or “mini-stroke”) are sometimes known as "warning strokes." It's important to know that: TIA's are a warning sign of a future stroke; is a medical emergency, just like a major stroke; require emergency care. Call 9-1-1 right away if you feel symptoms of a stroke or see signs in another person; There is no way to know in the beginning whether symptoms are from a TIA or from a major type of stroke; Like ischemic strokes, blood clots often cause TIAs; More than a third of people who have a TIA and don't get treatment have a major stroke within 1 year. As many as 10% to 15% of people will have a major stroke within 3 months of a TIA.

High Blood Pressure also called hypertension, is blood pressure that is higher than normal. High blood pressure usually has no warning signs or symptoms. Your blood pressure changes throughout the day based on your activities. A normal blood pressure level is less than 120/80 mmHg. High blood pressure usually develops over time. No matter your age, you can take steps each day to keep your blood pressure in a healthy range. The higher your blood pressure levels, the more risk you have for other health problems, such as heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. It can happen because of unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as not getting enough regular physical activity. Certain health conditions, such as diabetes and having obesity, can also increase the risk for developing high blood pressure. High blood pressure can also happen during pregnancy.

Stroke and brain problems - High blood pressure can cause the arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the brain to burst or be blocked, causing a stroke. Brain cells die during a stroke because they do not get enough oxygen. Stroke can cause serious disabilities in speech, movement, and other basic activities. A stroke can cause death. Having high blood pressure, especially in midlife, is linked to having poorer cognitive function and dementia later in life.

Prevention - Many people with high blood pressure can lower their blood pressure into a healthy range or keep their numbers in a healthy range by making lifestyle changes. Talk with your health care team about:

- ❖ Physical activity each week (about 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week)
- ❖ Not smoking
- ❖ Eating a healthy diet, including limiting sodium (salt) and alcohol
- ❖ Keeping a healthy weight
- ❖ Managing stress
- ❖ Learn more about ways to manage and prevent high blood pressure.

In addition to making positive lifestyle changes, some people with high blood pressure need to take medicine to manage their blood pressure. Talk with your health care team right away if you think you have high blood pressure; If you've been told you have high blood pressure but do not have it under control. By taking action to lower your blood pressure, you can help protect yourself against heart disease and stroke, also called cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Excerpts taken from: American Heart Association Blog 1-800-242-8721 & Center for Disease Control Blog 1-800-232-4636

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