A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Blood Pressure Check

Awareness and Treatment of Uncontrolled Hypertension Among Adults —
Selected States, 2003-2010
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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Karen Hunter] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Karen Hunter, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, affects one in three adults in the United States. Of these, only half have it under control.

Dr. Amy Valderrama is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of getting your blood pressure screened regularly. Welcome to the show, Amy.

[Dr. Valderrama] Thank you, Karen.

[Karen Hunter] Amy, what is high blood pressure?

[Dr. Valderrama] Blood pressure is the force of blood against your artery walls as it circulates through your body. It's normally measured using two numbers. The first – systolic – is the top number and it represents the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart is beating. The second – diastolic – represents the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart is resting between beats. Normal blood pressure is when your systolic is less that 120 and your diastolic is less than 80. High blood pressure is when your systolic is 140 or greater or your diastolic is 90 or greater.

[Karen Hunter] What causes high blood pressure?

[Dr. Valderrama] There are a number of things that make you more likely to have high blood pressure, and these include older age, being African American, being overweight or obese, eating too much sodium in your diet, having a family history of high blood pressure, smoking, being physically inactive, and drinking too much alcohol.

[Karen Hunter] What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

[Dr. Valderrama] High blood pressure is usually called the "silent killer" because most people don't even realize they have it, and it often has no warning signs or symptoms.

[Karen Hunter] How often should we have our blood pressure checked?

[Dr. Valderrama] If your blood pressure is normal, which is less than 120 over 80, you should get your blood pressure checked at least once every two years. If it's high, you should get it checked at all your doctor's visits, and you can get your blood pressure checked between your doctor's visits and this can be done at home with your own blood pressure monitor. You can also have it done at a grocery store or at a pharmacy.

[Karen Hunter] How can we control our blood pressure?

[Dr. Valderrama] Well, first, if you're taking blood pressure medication, you should take it as your doctor has prescribed. You can also make healthy lifestyle choices which include eating a healthy, low sodium diet; exercising; maintaining a healthy weight; limiting alcohol use; and not smoking.

[Karen Hunter] Where can listeners get more information about high blood pressure?

[Dr. Valderrama] Listeners can get more information at www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure.

[Karen Hunter] Thanks, Amy. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Amy Valderrama about the importance of getting your blood pressure checked regularly.

Regular monitoring of blood pressure is important for both awareness and treatment. If you haven't had your blood pressure checked in the past two years, make an appointment with your health care provider today.

Until next time, be well. This is Karen Hunter for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.