

## **DON'T LET BLOOD PRESSURE SNEAK UP ON YOU**

Uncontrolled High Blood pressure can go unnoticed for years before it is discovered. And for some, by the time it hits it is too late. This is an area you can help your participants in a very positive way as you exercise. Ask -How many people attending your classes know their blood pressure measurement? If they do not – suggest that they find out. If they want to know why they should you can give them a few facts.



High Blood pressure is known as the silent killer because there are no basic symptoms to alert one to the fact that it is lurking inside the body. If allowed to continue the condition can lead to stroke, heart attack, kidney failure or blindness. This is why it is so important to find it before it finds you.

### **What is Blood Pressure anyway?**

How many people actually understand what blood pressure is and why it is so necessary to be aware of one's own measurement? Basically it is the force that keeps blood moving throughout the body. As it flows, the pressure is the force generated against the walls of the blood vessels carrying the blood to and from the heart.

### **How can I find my Blood Pressure?**

The best way to find out what your blood pressure should be, and to keep it under control, is to take it on a regular basis or .at the very least visit your doctor once a year for an annual check up. These days you don't have to be a trained nurse to take your own blood pressure. Small electronic machines are readily available in most pharmacies or box/department stores. Most include a heart rate check with the blood pressure measurement, which is also beneficial to know.

Blood Pressure is calculated using two measurements – one high (Systolic) the other lower (Diastolic). The Systolic Pressure – is the force or pressure when the heart beats. The Diastolic is the measurement taken as the heart rests between beats. The normal blood pressure measurement is calculated at 120/80 however this may differ slightly depending upon your age, physical fitness or overall health. For instance 130/90 would be way too high for an 18 year old whereas for someone in their 60's this could be acceptable.



### **Who is likely to have HBP?**

No one knows for sure why some people are more susceptible to the disease than others but reasons can include: it runs in the family, being overweight, age related, eat too much salt, drink too much alcohol, your skin colour, other medications that do not work together, stress and insufficient sleep. Once discovered, it can be controlled with medication but the best way is to take steps to avoid the condition in the first place.

In most cases even a slight change in lifestyle can do the trick (something you can live with) as it must be for the rest of your life. There is no point in "going on a diet" to lose weight, then, as soon as the weight is off, go back to the old habits.

### **What can some of these changes be?**

**First,** find out what your weight should be and try to get and keep it there. Don't go on a crash diet – remember this is for life. Weight is not put on overnight, like HBP it creeps up on you. It may have taken 10-15 years to fill up all the inside cavities of your body with fat before it even begins to show on the outside! Don't expect to lose pounds overnight, over a month or even a year. Losing weight incrementally will help keep it off. And don't keep stepping on those scales -measure yourself – keep a smaller pair of pants on hand – when they fit you know you have lost fat.

**Second:** look at your shopping list – check labels for fat calories, salt content, and the RDA levels for vitamins and minerals. Don't "over-shop". If you don't have it in the pantry or refrigerator you can't eat it. Buy fresh produce to get your vitamins naturally, eat a piece of fruit with every meal.

**Third:** Cook and eat at home! Did you know that recent statistics show that 50% of the nation eats out at some point every day?!! Even buying a coffee these days can add to the fat quotient. Eating at home will not only save you money and those unneeded calories, it can become a social event. Find out what going on with the family first hand and reduce stress of some of the running after them.

Fourth: Probably the MOST important change, as it can help with all the above, is EXERCISE. If people are coming to your class they are already committed, but are they getting as much out of your class as they could?

### **Your responsibility as an Instructor.**

Take a look at your program and ask yourself: Am I doing my best to encourage everyone to work towards THEIR own fitness needs? Am I offering options for each exercise or does everyone do exactly the same moves throughout my whole program? Am I always whining (especially at conferences or workshops) because people TALK in my class all the time? Maybe the answer to some of the above is that they are bored to tears because you don't keep up with exercise options are not giving them the variety they need.

Now, take a second look and ask yourself: Would I want to come to this class? If so, what will I get out of it?

So what is your job as an instructor? The bottom line - Encourage everyone to make sure they know their blood pressure measurement. If necessary, take a look at their lifestyle, make the necessary changes, and keep coming back to your exercise program because it is THE BEST!



You have done your job. Well done!

Prepared by Drusilla Leitch, WaterART Certification Director and 72 years young!

p.s. See digital blood pressure cuff – it is so easy to use and very accurate!