

# Health Awareness



## Dos And Don'ts For Managing High Blood Pressure During Cold And Flu Season

(NAPSA)—Colds and flu bring special considerations for people with high blood pressure, especially those on blood pressure medication. Here's how to keep your blood pressure stable:

**DO:** Keep track of medication. The American Heart Association's online tools at [www.heart.org/hbp](http://www.heart.org/hbp) include a downloadable chart to manage medications and a tracker that lets people set up text message reminders, text in their readings, track their blood pressure and connect with providers.

**DON'T:** Miss your flu shot. People who get a flu shot may reduce their risk of heart attack or stroke. Stay away from people who are sick and wash your hands regularly.

**DO:** Read labels on over-the-counter (OTC) cold and flu medicines. Look for warnings to those with high blood pressure and who take blood pressure medications. Some ingredients in cold and flu medicines can affect blood pressure. Decongestants, used for a stuffy nose or congestion, and some pain relievers, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), are known to raise blood pressure.

Decongestants include:

- Oxymetazoline
- Phenylephrine
- Pseudoephedrine.

NSAIDs include:

- ibuprofen
- naproxen sodium
- celecoxib.

Check with your doctor before taking these medicines. A decongestant should be used for only the shortest amount of time possible—and never by someone with severe or uncontrolled high blood pressure.

**DON'T:** Try to replace your prescriptions with supplements. There are



**People with high blood pressure should consult a doctor before taking any cold medicine.**

no special pills, vitamins or drinks that can substitute for prescription medications and lifestyle modifications. Talk to your health care provider before taking any over-the-counter drug or supplement that claims to lower blood pressure. "Your doctor and other health care providers should know which over-the-counter medicines or supplements you are taking," said Willie E. Lawrence, M.D., chief of cardiology at Research Medical Center, Kansas City, Mo. "If something claims to be 'natural' or you don't need a prescription, it's not necessarily benign. It's still a substance that has an effect on your body."

**DO:** Work with your health care practitioner. "If you have high blood pressure, it's important to know that some medicines, even supplements, will affect you differently," Dr. Lawrence adds. "If you're struggling to keep your pressure controlled, review your routines—including over-the-counter medicines and supplements—and talk with your doctor about changes you can make. You should never be too busy to manage your blood pressure."

Learn more at [www.heart.org/hbp](http://www.heart.org/hbp).

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