



# WOMEN'S HEALTH

## Wake Up, Women: Blood Pressure Not Just A “Man’s Problem”

(NAPSA)—Here’s heartening news: More women are paying attention to their hearts in recent years, thanks perhaps to public awareness campaigns that emphasize a woman’s risk for heart disease. Too many, however, may not recognize the critical role blood pressure plays in heart health. In fact, women are less likely than men to make lifestyle changes to meet target goals for healthy blood pressure. Forty percent of women are not controlling their high blood pressure, or hypertension, according to a study published in a recent issue of *Hypertension: Journal of the American Heart Association*.

Altogether, high blood pressure affects more than 100 million adults in the U.S., putting them at a higher risk for heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and other health problems. Yet, according to the National Women’s Health Resource Center, 30 percent don’t know they have it.

A new recommendation by the American Heart Association (AHA) and other leading health organizations emphasizes the importance of regular home blood pressure monitoring in conjunction with a doctor’s supervision. This is especially important for pregnant women, as high blood pressure during pregnancy is a leading cause of maternal and infant deaths.

“It’s critical for women to make the connection between blood pressure and heart health. Especially when certain lifestyle factors such



as diet and exercise or a specific life stage such as pregnancy or menopause can put women at greater risk for high blood pressure,” said Dr. Annabelle Volgman, medical director of the Rush University Heart Center for Women. “With heart disease being the No. 1 killer of women, women should make home blood pressure monitoring a part of their daily routine at all stages of life.”

The AHA suggests it’s important to get a monitor that has been clinically validated to accurately measure blood pressure by the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation, the British Hypertension Society or the International Protocol from The European Society of Hypertension.

Dr. Volgman offers the following tips for home blood pressure monitoring:

- Make sure the cuff fits: Measure around your upper arm and choose a monitor that comes with the correct size cuff. For example, Omron blood pressure monitors

come with two cuff sizes or have expandable cuffs to fit both regular and large-size arms.

- Don’t smoke, drink caffeinated beverages or exercise within the 30 minutes of measuring your blood pressure.

- Sit with your back straight and supported—for example, choose a dining chair rather than a stool.

- Put your feet flat on the floor; don’t cross your legs.

- Your arm should be supported on a flat surface, such as a table, with your upper arm at heart level.

- Make sure the middle of the cuff is placed directly over your brachial artery—down the middle of your arm. Each time you measure, take two or three readings one minute apart and record all the results. Some monitors automatically take consecutive readings, display the average and even store the readings in memory.

- Vary the times of day and situations in which you take your blood pressure, knowing that it can be elevated in the morning, if you’re stressed, or after drinking coffee and/or smoking. Track your readings over time and share them with your doctor.

*Dr. Volgman urges women to make the connection between blood pressure and heart health. For more information on blood pressure management and a free informational brochure, visit [www.bpnnumbers.com](http://www.bpnnumbers.com).*