INFORM Yourself

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HEART DISEASE)

Make the Decision to Protect Your Vision

Uncontrolled blood pressure can damage the blood vessels in your eyes. This is called retinopathy. It can also cause your optic nerve to swell. Both of these things can cause vision loss. High blood pressure is also a factor in other eye diseases like glaucoma and macular degeneration. People with high blood pressure are also at risk for stroke, which can cause vision loss related to brain damage.

Talk with your provider about how often you should have your eyes checked by an eye doctor. Even if you don’t have trouble seeing, you should get your eyes checked. That’s because it’s not just your vision that is being tested. Your eyes are also being checked for the diseases and conditions mentioned above. The earlier an issue is found and treated, the better the outcome.

Sources: American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Heart Association, Mayo Clinic

Take Care of Your Kidneys

Your kidneys remove waste and extra water from your blood. People with high blood pressure need to pay attention to their kidney health for 2 main reasons.

1. High blood pressure can damage the blood vessels in your kidneys. This makes it hard for your kidneys to work properly.
2. When your kidneys don’t work well, they aren’t able to remove the waste and extra water from your blood. When the extra water builds up, your blood pressure goes up, too.

Kidney disease doesn’t usually cause symptoms in its early stages, but some people may notice swelling in the legs, feet, or ankles. As kidney disease gets worse, you may have the symptoms that follow. If you do, talk to your health care provider right away.

• Appetite loss and/or weight loss
• Nausea and/or vomiting
• Tiredness and/or trouble sleeping
• Increased or decreased urination
• Generalized itching or numbness
• Headaches
• Muscle cramps
• Shortness of breath
• Chest pain

It’s important to know that you may not have symptoms. That’s why you should have your blood pressure and your kidney health checked regularly. Your health care provider can tell how well your kidneys are working through simple blood and urine tests. If there are concerns, your provider may refer you to a nephrologist. This is a provider who specializes in kidney health.

When kidney disease is found early, it can be treated and you can avoid other diseases and complications. Talk to your provider about how often you should be screened for kidney disease—and be sure to get your recommended screenings!

You can slow or prevent kidney disease by taking steps to lower your blood pressure. Read the article on page 3 to learn about lifestyle changes that can help control your blood pressure. Talk with your health care provider about which ones are right for you.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)
Care Coordination and Case Management: We’re Here for You
PrimeWest Health provides Care Coordination and Case Management programs to help keep members healthy. These programs let us work with you and your health care providers to make sure you get the services you need. Your care coordinator or case manager can do the following:
• Help you when you have questions about your health care or prescriptions
• Schedule medical appointments as needed
• Promote good health practices that may prevent problems
• Help arrange services you need to stay safe and healthy at home

PrimeWest Health encourages you to take advantage of these programs. Let your care coordinator or case manager know when and how they can help you get the care and services you need. If you do not know who your care coordinator or case manager is, call one of the following:
• Jennifer at 1-888-588-4420 ext. 5342
• Member Services at 1-866-431-0801
• TTY users call 1-800-627-3529 or 711

These calls are free.

Remember Your Flu Shot!
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend most people over the age of 6 months get a flu shot every year. Flu season has already started, so talk to your provider today!

Make Your Medication a Must
If your health care provider has prescribed medication for your high blood pressure, it is important that you take it as directed. The medication you were prescribed helps control your blood pressure. If your blood pressure is not controlled, it can lead to other problems like heart disease, stroke, vision loss, and kidney failure.

There are many different medications for high blood pressure. They work in different ways. Sometimes you have to try a couple different ones to figure out what is right for you. It is important to keep taking your medications even if your blood pressure readings are normal and you feel fine. Don’t ever stop taking a medication for blood pressure without first talking to your health care provider or pharmacist. Stopping some medications too quickly can cause your blood pressure to go higher than it was before!

There are things you can do to make taking your medication easier.
• If you have trouble remembering to take your medication at a certain time, try setting an alarm.
• If you have side effects when you first start taking a medication, don’t give up! The side effects you feel should get better as your body gets used to the medication. If you continue to experience troublesome side effects, talk to your provider. There may be another medication you can try.

Keep a line of communication open with your provider.
• Make sure you understand how to take your medication correctly.
• Get answers to questions. For example, ask how different medications can interact, and what you should do if you miss a dose. You’ll also want to ask if there are special instructions about how to take the medication. One common question is if you should take the medication with food or on an empty stomach.

Source: American Heart Association
How many people are affected?
High blood pressure is very common in the United States. In fact, according to the American Heart Association, over 100 million adults have high blood pressure. That’s almost half of all adults in the United States. Unfortunately, only about a quarter of those with high blood pressure have it under control.

Who is affected?
- **Gender** – Women are as likely as men to have high blood pressure at some point in their lives. However, rates of high blood pressure are different in women and men at different ages. Men are more likely to have high blood pressure from ages 18 – 59. Women are more likely to have high blood pressure at ages 60 and over.
- **Race** – African Americans are more likely to have high blood pressure. They are also more likely to develop high blood pressure at an earlier age, and are more likely to have complications.

Why is high blood pressure a problem?
High blood pressure can make you more likely to develop certain health conditions. It can lead to heart attack, stroke, and heart failure. It can also affect your kidneys and your vision. Read the articles on the cover for more information.

Save Yourself a Trip—Avoid the Emergency Room and Hospital
No one wants to end up in the emergency room or the hospital. Unfortunately, people with high blood pressure can find themselves there. You can help prevent a hospital stay or trip to the emergency room by working to control your blood pressure. Taking your medication as prescribed is a very important part of this. In addition, making lifestyle changes can be a big help. The following are some lifestyle changes you can talk to your health care provider about making:
- Eating healthy and decreasing the salt in your diet
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Increasing physical activity
- Limiting alcohol intake
- Quitting smoking
- Managing stress and doing relaxation or breathing exercises

You should also routinely monitor your blood pressure at home. This allows you to detect changes and tell your health care provider about them.

Taking your medication as prescribed and making lifestyle changes are key parts of your treatment plan. If you have any questions or concerns, be sure to talk to your health care provider.

Source: Mayo Clinic
Health and wellness or prevention information

Note: The information in this magazine is not professional medical advice. It is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment. Do not ignore your health care provider’s advice or wait to ask for it because of something you read here. Links to other websites are provided as a resource only. PrimeWest Health does not endorse, recommend, or pay for products or services offered by such sites.
Attention. If you need free help interpreting this document, call the above number.

1-866-431-0801 (toll free); TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711

Attention. Si vous avez besoin d’une aide gratuite pour interpréter le présent document, veuillez appeler au numéro ci-dessus.

Thov ua twb zoo nyeem. Yog hais tias koj xav tau kev pab txhais lus rau tsab ntaub ntawv no pub dawb, ces hu rau tus najnpawb xov tooj saum toj no.

Hubachiisa. Dokumentii kun tola akka siif hiikamu gargaarsa hoo feete, lakkoobsa gubbatti kenneem bilbili.

Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в устном переводе данного документа, позвоните по указанному выше телефону.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para interpretar este documento, llame al número indicado arriba.

Chú ý. Nếu quý vị cần được giúp đỡ dịch tài liệu này miễn phí, xin gọi số bên trên.
Civil Rights Notice

Discrimination is against the law. PrimeWest Health does not discriminate on the basis of any of the following:

- race
- color
- national origin
- creed
- religion
- sexual orientation
- public assistance status
- age
- disability (including physical or mental impairment)
- sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity)
- marital status
- political beliefs
- medical condition
- health status
- receipt of health care services
- claims experience
- medical history
- genetic information

Auxiliary Aids and Services: PrimeWest Health provides auxiliary aids and services, like qualified interpreters or information in accessible formats, free of charge and in a timely manner to ensure an equal opportunity to participate in our health care programs. Contact PrimeWest Health at memberservices@primewest.org, or call Member Services at 1-866-431-0801 (toll free) or TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711.

Language Assistance Services: PrimeWest Health provides translated documents and spoken language interpreting, free of charge and in a timely manner, when language assistance services are necessary to ensure limited English speakers have meaningful access to our information and services. Contact PrimeWest Health at memberservices@primewest.org, or call Member Services at 1-866-431-0801 (toll free) or TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711.

Civil Rights Complaints

You have the right to file a discrimination complaint if you believe you were treated in a discriminatory way by PrimeWest Health. You may contact any of the following four agencies directly to file a discrimination complaint.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
You have the right to file a complaint with the OCR, a federal agency, if you believe you have been discriminated against because of any of the following:

- race
- color
- national origin
- age
- disability
- sex
- religion (in some cases)
Contact the **OCR** directly to file a complaint:
Director
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office for Civil Rights
200 Independence Avenue SW
Room 515F
HHH Building
Washington, DC 20201
Customer Response Center: Toll-free: 800-368-1019
TDD 800-537-7697
Email: ocrmail@hhs.gov

**Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR)**
In Minnesota, you have the right to file a complaint with the MDHR if you believe you have been discriminated against because of any of the following:

- race
- color
- national origin
- religion
- creed
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marital status
- public assistance status
- disability

Contact the **MDHR** directly to file a complaint:
Minnesota Department of Human Rights
540 Fairview Avenue North
Suite 201
St. Paul, MN 55104
651-539-1100 (voice)
800-657-3704 (toll free)
711 or 800-627-3529 (MN Relay)
651-296-9042 (fax)
Info.MDHR@state.mn.us (email)

**Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)**
You have the right to file a complaint with DHS if you believe you have been discriminated against in our health care programs because of any of the following:

- race
- color
- national origin
- creed
- religion
- sexual orientation
- public assistance status
- age
- disability (including physical or mental impairment)
- sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity)
- marital status
- political beliefs
- medical condition
- health status
- receipt of health care services
- claims experience
- medical history
- genetic information

Complaints must be in writing and filed within 180 days of the date you discovered the alleged discrimination. The complaint must contain your name and address and describe the discrimination you are complaining about. After we get your complaint, we will review it and notify you in writing about whether we have authority to investigate. If we do, we will investigate the complaint.
DHS will notify you in writing of the investigation’s outcome. You have the right to appeal the outcome if you disagree with the decision. To appeal, you must send a written request to have DHS review the investigation outcome. Be brief and state why you disagree with the decision. Include additional information you think is important.

If you file a complaint in this way, the people who work for the agency named in the complaint cannot retaliate against you. This means they cannot punish you in any way for filing a complaint. Filing a complaint in this way does not stop you from seeking out other legal or administrative actions.

Contact DHS directly to file a discrimination complaint:
Civil Rights Coordinator
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Equal Opportunity and Access Division
P.O. Box 64997
St. Paul, MN 55164-0997
651-431-3040 (voice) or use your preferred relay service

PrimeWest Health Complaint Notice
You have the right to file a complaint with PrimeWest Health if you believe you have been discriminated against because of any of the following:

- medical condition
- health status
- receipt of health care services
- claims experience
- medical history
- genetic information
- disability (including mental or physical impairment)
- marital status
- age
- sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity)
- sexual orientation
- national origin
- race
- color
- religion
- creed
- public assistance status
- political beliefs

You can file a complaint and ask for help in filing a complaint in person or by mail, phone, fax, or email at:
Rebecca Fuller
Civil Rights Coordinator
PrimeWest Health
3905 Dakota St
Alexandria, MN 56308
Toll Free: 1-866-431-0801
TTY: 1-800-627-3529 or 711
Fax: 1-320-762-8750
Email: rebecca.fuller@primewest.org

American Indian Health Statement
American Indians can continue or begin to use tribal and Indian Health Services (IHS) clinics. We will not require prior approval or impose any conditions for you to get services at these clinics. For elders age 65 years and older this includes Elderly Waiver (EW) services accessed through the tribe. If a doctor or other provider in a tribal or IHS clinic refers you to a provider in our network, we will not require you to see your primary care provider prior to the referral.