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TOOL BOX TALK

July 10, 2023

What You Need to Know About High Blood Pressure

How do you know if you have high blood pressure? It is recommended that employees have their blood pressure checked regularly. A consistent blood pressure reading of 140/90 mmHg or higher is considered high blood pressure. The top number, or *systolic* pressure, is the pressure exerted by the heart during each beat when the heart is pumping blood. The bottom number, or *diastolic* pressure, is the pressure inside arteries between each heartbeat.

What's wrong with having high blood pressure? Left untreated, high blood pressure can damage just about every organ in the body. High blood pressure:

- Puts constant, prolonged strain on the heart, which can eventually lead to a heart attack.
- Causes arteries to thicken and harden, which reduces the amount of blood flowing to vital organs.
- Weakens the walls of arteries in the brain, which can cause these arteries to rupture, resulting in stroke or death.
- Damages arteries in the eyes, which can lead to blindness.

How can you prevent or control high blood pressure? Fortunately there are a lot of simple things you can do to keep from developing hypertension--or to keep it under control.

- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
- Reduce salt and sodium intake.
- Get regular exercise.
- Lose a few pounds if you're overweight.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Quit smoking.

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