

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is called the “silent killer” because it often has no warning signs or symptoms. Although common—about 1 in 3 U.S. adults have high blood pressure according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—hypertension is a dangerous condition that increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. With no symptoms, many people don’t know they have hypertension. Checking blood pressure readings is the only way to know for sure whether it is too high.

Quieting the “Silent Killer”

A new program allows Christian Brothers Services health plan participants to better manage hypertension through their connected device.

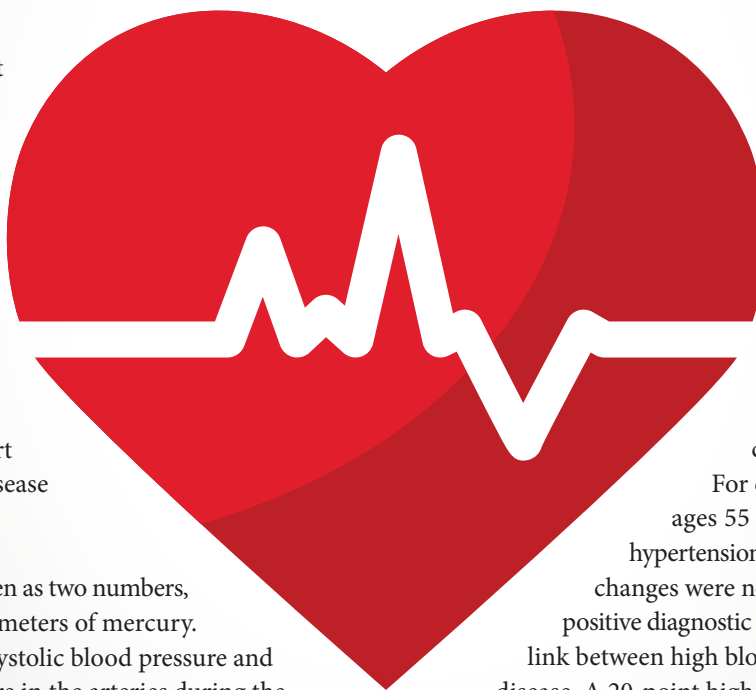
What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is a measurement of the force exerted against the walls of arteries as the heart pumps blood to the body. Blood pressure tends to increase as people get older. This is because blood vessels become stiffer as one ages. When that happens, blood pressure goes up. High blood pressure increases the chance of having a stroke, heart attack, heart failure, kidney disease or early death.

Blood pressure readings are given as two numbers, referred to in mm Hg, or millimeters of mercury. The top number is called the systolic blood pressure and refers to the amount of pressure in the arteries during the contraction of the heart muscle. The bottom number is called the diastolic blood pressure and refers to blood pressure when the heart muscle is between beats. For example, 120 over 80. One or both numbers can be too high.

What do the Numbers Mean?

In 2017, the American Heart Association, the American College of Cardiology and nine other health organizations lowered the numbers for the diagnosis of Stage-1 hypertension to 130/80 and higher for all adults. The previous guidelines set the threshold at 140/90 for people younger than age 65 and 150/80 for those ages 65 and older. Normal blood pressure is now considered when blood



pressure is lower than 120/80 most of the time; elevated blood pressure is between 120-129/80. A reading of 140/90 or higher is considered Stage-2 hypertension and anything higher than 180/120 is a hypertensive crisis.

The updated numbers mean there are now a lot more people classified as having hypertension.

For example, 70-79 percent of men ages 55 and older are now in the hypertension category. However, the guideline changes were not meant as a scare tactic but as a positive diagnostic step. Studies have found a clear link between high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. A 20-point higher systolic or a 10-point higher diastolic blood pressure is associated with double the risk of death from a heart attack, stroke or other cardiovascular complications.

If people recognize the dangers of high blood pressure before their numbers become elevated, they can closely monitor their condition and make lifestyle changes to lessen their risk. People at higher risk of high blood pressure include African Americans; those who are obese; people who are often stressed or anxious; those who drink too much alcohol, eat too much salt (sodium); people with a family history of high blood pressure; those who have diabetes, and smokers. ►►

Advanced Technology to Manage Hypertension

Until recently, checking blood pressure readings meant a trip to the doctor or the local pharmacy to use one of their free machines. Purchasing an at-home monitor meant learning how to use it and keeping a log of readings. However, with new digital technologies now available to patients, such as those for diabetes management, the trend is to shift away from hospitals and doctors' offices and toward at-home, app-connected daily readings with a greater focus on prevention and care. This digital technology now includes a program for those with hypertension.

Beginning in 2020, Christian Brothers Services health plan participants identified with hypertension will be eligible to enroll in the Livongo for Hypertension Program at no cost to them.

The program combines advanced technology with personalized coaching to support participants in managing their hypertension by enabling home blood pressure measurement, promoting guideline and treatment adherence, and encouraging healthy behaviors such as increased physical activity and improved diets.

The program uses an automatic blood pressure monitor, provided free of charge, with remote data transmission sent to Livongo. Participants enrolled in the program have round-the-clock access to knowledgeable, caring health professionals whenever and wherever they need them. They also receive personalized content and tips, as well as nudges, emails and texts.

Personalized Recommendations and Expert Coaching

A few days after enrolling, participants will receive a welcome email, a connected monitor and a welcome kit with instructions for downloading the app and pairing a smartphone to the monitor. The kit also includes instructions on the best ways to take a blood pressure reading, such as the proper way to sit and the appropriate location for placing the cuff on the arm.

After everything is paired up, the system encourages participants to take five blood pressure checks in five days. This "Drive to Five" establishes a blood pressure baseline, which enables Livongo to provide frequency of checking recommendations, content personalization and focused coaching content on diet and nutrition, exercise, stress management and medication use.

The Livongo for Hypertension Program is a great use of technology that will help CBS health plan participants control this serious and chronic condition.



Participants also receive a Health Summary Report and convenient automatic reminders to check their blood pressure. For participants on high blood pressure medication, the program uses clinical algorithms to ensure they are receiving maximum medication benefits.

High blood pressure has been “silently” killing people for far too long. The Livongo for Hypertension Program is a great use of technology that will help CBS health plan participants control this serious and chronic condition and enable them to lead healthier lives. ☀️

John Airola is the Managing Director, Christian Brothers Health Benefit Services.


Christian Brothers Services offers a wide coverage of health wellness programs with a focus on preventive care. For additional resources, visit: cbservices.org/Health-Wellness-Programs.html.



Livongo offers a whole person platform that empowers people with chronic conditions to live better and healthier lives, beginning with diabetes and now including hypertension, weight management, diabetes prevention, and behavioral health. Livongo pioneered the new category of Applied Health Signals to silence noisy healthcare. Our team of data scientists aggregate and interpret substantial amounts of health data and information to create actionable, personalized and timely health signals. The Livongo approach has demonstrated that it can deliver better clinical and financial outcomes while creating a different and better experience for people with chronic conditions. For more information, visit: livongo.com or engage with Livongo on LinkedIn or Twitter.

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