



**Date: May 26, 2013**

## **Healthy Sunday Topic: Are You Keeping the Blood Pressure Challenge?**

Two years ago, several leaders took a pledge to lead a healthier life by

- monitoring their blood pressure regularly and sharing it with their doctor,
- increasing their physical activity,
- managing stress by keeping a positive attitude, and
- drinking more water, eating fruits, more vegetables and fewer salty, sugary and fatty foods.



**L to R:** Administering the Pledge is Elaine Hart-Brothers, MD. Taking the Pledge (**L to R**) are: State Representative Mickey Michaux; Director of the Durham County Health Department – Gayle Harris; Durham County Commissioner – Rev. Michael Page; President of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham & Vicinity– Rev. William Everett

We followed up with some of the leaders who took the pledge to see if they were keeping up with the challenge

### **Gayle Harris, the Director Durham County Health Department reported that she:**

Periodically checks her blood pressure  
Takes medication as prescribed to maintain normal blood pressure  
Exercises more often and has lost weight

**Reverend Michael Page** says, “I walk every day and I work to maintain a good reading on my blood pressure by eating healthy and exercising regularly”

### **Minnie Forte-Brown, Vice Chair of Durham public school board reported that she:**

Takes medication daily as prescribed  
Keeps doctors’ appointments  
Walks every morning  
Exercises three times weekly  
Avoids stress  
Happy to report that her blood pressure was 122/80 during the last doctor’s visit

### Why should you check your blood pressure regularly?

More than 1 out of every 10 Americans has high blood pressure. Many of those who have high blood pressure do not know it. This is a uniquely silent disease. There are no symptoms until it is too late; the catastrophe of a heart attack or stroke is all too often the first indication of a problem.

Because high blood pressure is silent and can be treated effectively, early detection (home management) is important. Hypertension is unique in this regard. However, don't be panicked by any one reading. Because your blood pressure varies up and down, you will need to have several readings if the first reading is elevated.

The blood pressure reading has two numbers. The higher one is the systolic pressure and the lower is diastolic pressure. Blood pressure is considered to be high if the higher number exceeds 140 or the lower number exceeds 90. Traditionally, "normal" is said to be 120 over 80.



**Cedric Bright, MD, Assistant Dean of Special Programs and Admissions, Department of Medical Education, UNC School of Medicine and the 112th President of the National Medical Association states, "we want you to stay healthy longer rather than to get well soon".**

Uncontrolled high blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke. North Carolina has the nation's tenth highest stroke death rate. In 2011, approximately 4,290 North Carolinians succumbed to stroke, making it the state's fourth leading cause of death behind cancer, heart disease, and chronic lower respiratory diseases. Historically, African Americans have higher stroke death rates than Caucasians, and they are also more likely to die from a stroke at a younger age than their white counterparts. While stroke death rates in the state are higher among men in the 45-84 year age group, the total number of stroke deaths for all age groups each year is higher among women. Although there are inherent risk factors for stroke, 80 percent of strokes are preventable by making lifestyle changes that include diet, exercise, and blood

pressure and cholesterol control.

### **REMEMBER**

The most important thing to realize is that you must manage this problem yourself. It will be up to you to control your weight, your exercise, your salt intake, and to take your medicines. It should be up to you to take your own blood pressure. Your doctor should be your trusted advisor but cannot assume your responsibility. No matter how much the doctor would like to take care of this for you, he or she cannot. If you are going to manage this problem, you need the blood pressure readings so that you can report changes or difficulties to the doctor. **You are in control.**



**A**void stress

**B**e active

**C**heck your blood pressure regularly

**Health Tip is a message from your Community Health Coalition, Inc.** and is written in partnership with Old North State Medical Society, North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, Central Carolina Black Nurses' Council Inc., The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity, and Durham Regional Hospital.

***REMEMBER Healthy People 2020: A Clear Vision to Healthy Living!***