



## **May is Blood Pressure Awareness Month**

Many people worry about their risk of death by heart disease, especially as they age. However, most people do not know that the overwhelming majority of heart disease is preventable, or how to identify and reduce risk factors.

Nearly one out of five people have high blood pressure (aka hypertension), and don't even know it. It may develop slowly, with no obvious signs or symptoms, earning the title of the "silent killer". Blood pressure is the force against which the heart muscle must pump to eject the blood that will circulate through the body. The higher the blood pressure, the harder the heart must work. Over time, working against a high blood pressure places a strain on the heart, which is often first detected by an electrocardiogram (aka EKG) or an ultrasound of the heart (aka echocardiogram). It may also place a strain on other organs, including the kidneys.

Identifying hypertension is easier than you may think and it starts with knowing your numbers! Blood pressure is easily measured by a machine that is available for use in most pharmacies and retail stores. They are also available for purchase and most have a memory function to store your readings. Once you know your numbers, it is also important for you to understand what the numbers mean:

## **In This Issue**

**May is Blood Pressure Awareness Month**

**Tell Us How We Are Doing!**

**Stress Testing at HCA**

**Healthy Spring Recipe**

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Blood Pressure Category	Systolic mm Hg (upper #)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower #)
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80
Prehypertension	120 – 139	or	80 – 89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	140 – 159	or	90 – 99
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	160 or higher	or	100 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (Emergency care needed)	Higher than 180	or	Higher than 110

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If you do have your own BP cuff, we suggest that you bring it with you to your next appointment so that we can confirm its accuracy. Blood pressure is very dynamic, and can vary depending on activity and environment. Many people have a dramatic increase in their readings when it is checked in the office, but then it normalizes at home (aka "white coat hypertension"). Checking your BP cuff's accuracy in the office helps identify such conditions and also reduces the risk of prescribing too many or too few blood pressure medications. So what is YOUR risk? The American Heart Association makes it easy to find out with their High Blood Pressure Health Risk Calculator. Just enter your BP readings and start reducing your risk factors today! <http://tools.bigbeelabs.com/aha/tools/hbp/>

## Tell Us How We are Doing!

How was your visit? We want to know! Simply complete a short survey about the care you received from your HCA Provider. To learn more, ask the check out receptionist after your next office visit! [Click here for survey!](#)



## Stress Testing at HCA

### How High Can you Go?

Exercise Stress testing is one of the primary tools that a Cardiologist will use to check for coronary artery disease. Depending upon the patient's clinical status, the stress test can be performed using only the treadmill or using a combination of the treadmill with nuclear imaging. But did you know that it is also a valuable tool in evaluating hypertension (high blood pressure)? After having your blood pressure checked before the testing, you will be subjected to increasing levels or workload or stress. From a starting speed of 1.7 miles per hour and a 10% grade the speed and angle of the treadmill are automatically changed every three minutes. Your blood pressure is then evaluated at the two minute point in each stage to see how much it changes from the starting point. While a slight increase in blood pressure is normal during a stress test, if it should rise rapidly or the top number approaches 200, then this may be an indication that blood pressure medication may be indicated.

For those patients already diagnosed with high blood pressure, the stress test is an easy way to evaluate the effectiveness of the medications that have been prescribed.

If you have concerns about your blood pressure please be sure to schedule an appointment with your cardiologist for a proper evaluation.

### Stress Testing at HCA

Did you know that the stress department at HCA performs approximately 7000 tests annually? This consists of a little over 3000 nuclear stress tests and the rest being non nuclear exercise stress tests.

When you arrive for your stress test you can rest assured that you are in good hands. Our RNs, PAs, Technical Staff and front desk personnel average over 15 years of working in their respective fields with some having over 30 years of experience. From the time that you check in until you walk out the door you can be assured that the staff is fully trained to react to any situation that may occur.

## Spring Recipe - Crock Pot Mediterranean Chicken

### Crock Pot Mediterranean Chicken - Makes 6 Servings

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/2 - 3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts (it's fine to use frozen)
- 1 28 oz. can whole tomatoes mostly drained and chopped a bit (I took a knife to the tomatoes while they were still in the can.)
- 2 14-oz. cans artichoke hearts drained
- 1 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup kalamata olives, pitted and chopped
- 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
- 1 heaping tablespoon curry powder
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
  
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley or cilantro, chopped, to garnish

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- Combine everything in your slow cooker (except the fresh parsley).
- Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours (or on high for 3 1/2-4 hours)
- Once finished, use two forks to break apart the chicken into large shredded chunks. Stir the chicken back into the crock pot mixture. You can serve immediately or let it hang out on warm for 30 minutes.
- Sprinkle with parsley and serve over couscous, brown rice, quinoa or whole wheat pasta.



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