



## Wellness-Fitness Newsletter

Spring 2011

### MAY IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE EDUCATION MONTH

Nearly one in three American adults is diagnosed with high blood pressure. Frequently called the “silent killer” because there are seldom warning signs or discernible symptoms, untreated high blood pressure is responsible for 35% of all heart attacks and strokes; 49% of all episodes of heart failure; and 24% of all premature deaths. Often, the only way to know if your blood pressure is high is to have it checked.

#### The Blood Pressure Reading

A blood pressure reading is made up of two numbers. The first number is a measure of systolic pressure, which measures how much the blood pushes against blood vessel walls during a heartbeat. The second number is the diastolic pressure, which measures the pressure in between beats while the heart relaxes. A person’s blood pressure is usually expressed in terms of the systolic pressure over the diastolic pressure, for example 140/90.

#### What is a High Reading?

Normal blood pressure is a systolic pressure of less than 120 and a diastolic pressure of less than 80 — for example, 118/76. High blood pressure (hypertension) is defined in an adult as a blood pressure greater than or equal to systolic pressure of 140, or greater than or equal to diastolic pressure of 90.

#### Risk Factors

There are both controllable and uncontrollable factors that can contribute to an individual’s risk of developing hypertension. Controllable risk factors include lifestyle choices and modifiable habits like smoking, diet, and weight. Uncontrollable risk factors include:

- **Heredity:** Your chances of developing high blood pressure are greater if other close relatives had it.
- **Gender:** Up to the age of 45, men are more likely than are women to develop high blood pressure; women’s risk increases after menopause.
- **Race:** People of African American descent can develop high blood pressure earlier than people of Caucasian descent.
- **Age:** Risk increases with age. High blood pressure occurs most often in men older than 45 and in women older than 55.

#### It Pays to Get your Blood Pressure Checked

Having your blood pressure checked regularly will help you identify whether you have high blood pressure or if you might be at risk for it. If you’ve been diagnosed with high blood pressure, frequent screenings will help you monitor how well your blood pressure stays in control.



#### To Reduce High Blood Pressure:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Try to lose weight if you are overweight.
- Be more physically active.
- Select foods lower in salt and sodium.
- Don’t drink alcohol.
- Manage your stress.
- Don’t smoke.

#### Additional Resources

- Find out more about high blood pressure by reading the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) factsheet at:

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Hbp/HBP\\_WholsAtRisk.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Hbp/HBP_WholsAtRisk.html)



## STAND UP FOR STRONG ABS

Your “core” muscles (those in the abdomen and back) help you stand upright, maintain proper posture, and move the body in different planes of motion (forward, backward, and side-to-side). Core stability is extremely important to any bodily movement, which is why an exercise routine that targets your core is vitally important.

While many core muscle workouts take place lying on the ground, if you really want to round out your core routine, try going vertical. At a recent health and fitness summit of the American College of Sports Medicine, experts suggested complementing your floor core routine with exercises done standing upright, called “vertical core training” (VCT).

### Importance of VCT

VCT utilizes a standing or kneeling

position, so the core has to work to hold the body up against gravity while stabilizing the spine to support particular movements, such as reaching overhead or throwing a ball.

### Benefits of VCT

VCT takes a “functional” approach to strength training by incorporating everyday movements that engage all core musculature. There are many benefits of vertical core exercise:

- *It strengthens and stabilizes the core muscles* along with the pelvis, thoracic (middle) spine, ankles, and feet muscles.
- *It improves function and balance.* Standing combines the challenge of keeping one’s balance while performing movements that shift body weight over one or both legs.

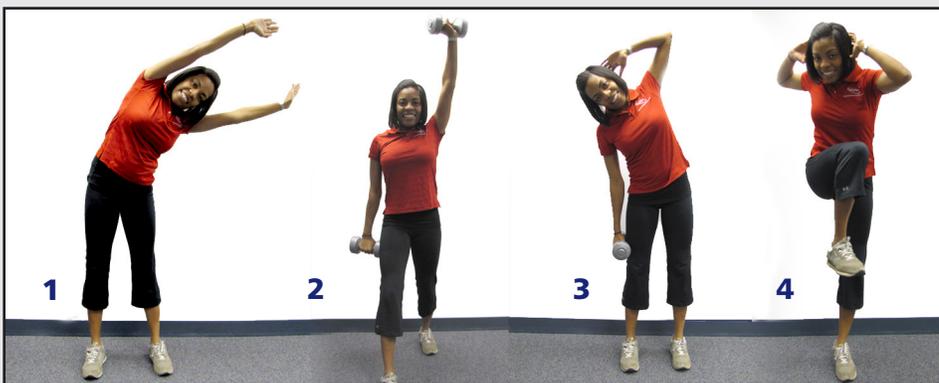
— *It builds stability.* Foot stability is inextricably tied to the bones and muscles of the legs to the pelvis, where all the core muscles attach.

— *It links strength with movement.* Because every rib is attached to the thoracic spine, arm movement should be part of core training to help the body develop stability.

### Workout Tips

For washboard abs, though, don’t lose those sit-ups. Since it isn’t specific to one muscle, VCT won’t give you the same level of isolated muscle fatigue that exercises like crunches provide. Check with the professional staff at your FOH Fitness Center for help developing a customized core training program, and always consult your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

**There are a variety of vertical core training exercises that build muscular endurance, enhance stability, and build strength using gravity, resistance, and active movement.**



### 1) Standing Reach

Stand with your feet wider than your shoulders and reach your arms up toward the ceiling, keeping your arms alongside your ears. Reach your arms as far to the left as you can as you draw your abdominal muscles in toward your navel. Hold the position for 10 seconds and then slowly switch sides. As you gain strength, perform the movement holding a medicine ball in your hands overhead.

### 2) Overhead Press with Dumbbells

Stand in a split stance, one foot in front of the other and your knees slightly bent, while holding a pair of light dumbbells in front of your shoulders. Keeping your feet in the same position, lower one weight downward as you simultaneously press the other weight overhead without locking your elbows. Alternate arms for 20 repetitions, then switch foot position. As you get stronger, you can do a side bend during each overhead press.

### 3) Dumbbell Side Bends

Stand holding a dumbbell by your right side and place your left hand behind your head. Keeping abs tight and legs straight, reach your right hand downward toward your right foot. (Your left elbow will rise upward toward the ceiling.) Return to the starting position. Perform 20 repetitions on each side.

### 4) Cross Crunch

Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Draw your right knee up and across your body and tap it with your left elbow. Then draw your left knee up and across your body, tapping it with your right elbow. Continue on alternate sides.



## DEALING WITH HEALTH GOAL SLIP UPS

As the first few months of the New Year pass, do you find your resolutions waning? Staying motivated and focused on behavior change goals can become challenging over time. There are two keys to maintaining the gains you have made and to continuing to make progress toward your health resolutions:

1. Prevent "slips" from occurring.
2. Control how you respond to slips if they do occur.

### What is a "Slip"?

A slip up or slip is a mistake or momentary setback from your plan or goal. For example, missing your workout for a few days or consuming more calories than you planned during a special meal are slips. Remember that a slip can be a one-time experience and does not signal an inevitable downward spiral. Most of us who strive to change health-related behaviors (e.g., losing weight, quitting smoking, exercising more, etc.) will experience occasional set-backs or slips.

### Prevent Slips

The first step in preventing slips is to identify situations in which you expect to have difficulty maintaining your new habits. Think back and identify situations in which you remember having a particularly difficult time coping. Then list each situation on a sheet of paper.

For each high risk situation you list, develop strategies that could help you avoid or cope with the situation. Once you develop strategies, you can plan in advance for the kinds of high-risk situations that might test your willpower.

The cornerstone of behavior change and a good way to prevent slips is self-monitoring (e.g., journaling, tracking, or writing). Keep track of the foods you eat, how much exercise you do, and the triggers that trip you up. Writing something down keeps you accountable and allows you to discover subtle roadblocks that can hinder your efforts to change.

### Control your Response to Slips

While you can prevent many slips by planning ahead, you cannot prevent them all. Sometimes you'll find yourself in high-risk situations you couldn't predict. Although you will have slip ups, it doesn't need to mean failure. While there will always be times when you don't do as well as you'd like, your **response** to a slip-up is critical to sustaining your behavior change.

In particular, how you think about the slip is the most important factor in dealing with it. If you view the slip as a total return to old habits, you are more likely to give up your goal. A better alternative is to respond to a slip in a way that gets you back on track as quickly as possible. It is best to view a slip productively, as an opportunity for learning, and as a signal for more careful planning to avoid future slips.

An old Japanese proverb says, "Fall seven times, stand up eight." Obstacles and relapses are perfectly normal and should be expected during the process of making behavior changes, but don't be discouraged. Though it may seem tough at first, the long-term results will be well worth the effort. The most important thing is learning that if you slip, you CAN get back on track.

Remember, every day is an opportunity for a healthier you.



## NEW 2010 DIETARY GUIDELINES

The 7th Dietary Guidelines for Americans, published jointly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), was released on January 31, 2011. By law, every five years, the Dietary Guidelines must be revised to provide evidence-based nutritional guidance for Americans two years of age and older. These guidelines are used to set the standards for all Federal nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program.

Compared with earlier editions, the new guidelines provides stronger, clearly stated recommendations to reduce sugar (including foods with added sugars) and places a greater emphasis on lowering salt intake. Perhaps the greatest change is the Dietary Guidelines' focus on obesity as the number one public health concern, followed by the notably direct recommendation that Americans should simply eat less.

This version of the guidelines also offers 29 easy-to-follow key recommendations: 23 for the general public, and six additional recommendations for women and older adults. Below are some tips from the Dietary Guidelines that are meant to help people incorporate them into everyday living:

- Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- Avoid oversized portions.
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- Eat a varied diet that is nutrient dense.
- Compare sodium in prepared foods and choose products with less.
- Reduce sodium daily intake:
  - to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) for healthy adults.
  - to 1,500 mg for persons 51 and older and those of any age who are African American, have hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease.

The guidelines also suggest consuming less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fatty acids, and replacing them with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids. With a focus on energy balance, this edition also encourages Americans to maintain a healthy weight by balancing calorie intake with physical activity.

Other notable suggestions from the new guidelines include recommendations on improving nutritional literacy and cooking techniques, restructuring America's food environment, and improving the availability of affordable fresh produce.

The implementation guide, with additional resources and tools, including a next-generation Food Pyramid, will be released by USDA and HHS in the coming months.



### RESOURCES

#### Dietary Guidelines created by:

- [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)
- [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

#### For more information on the Dietary Guidelines, visit:

- [www.dietaryguidelines.gov](http://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)
- [www.healthfinder.gov/prevention](http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention)

#### For help assessing your weight, losing weight, and preventing weight gain, visit:

- [www.cdc.gov/healthyweight](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight)

**Wellness within your reach.**

**800.457.9808**

**[www.FOH.hhs.gov](http://www.FOH.hhs.gov)**

