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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **You Can Beat High Blood Pressure**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages you to check your blood pressure regularly to know your risk for health problems. Blood pressure is the pressure of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. Arteries carry blood from your heart to other parts of your body. Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day, but it can damage your heart and cause health problems if it stays high for a long time.

### **Know the Risks**

Hypertension, also called high blood pressure, is blood pressure that is higher than normal. In most cases, damage done from high blood pressure (HBP) occurs over time. High blood pressure usually has no warning signs or symptoms, and many people do not know they have it. Left undetected or uncontrolled, high blood pressure can lead to serious health issues such as:

- Heart attack — High blood pressure damages arteries that can become blocked and prevent blood flow to the heart muscle.
- Stroke — High blood pressure can cause blood vessels that supply blood and oxygen to the brain to become blocked or burst.
- Heart failure — The increased workload from high blood pressure can cause the heart to enlarge and fail to supply blood to the body.
- Kidney disease — High blood pressure can damage the arteries around the kidneys and interfere with their ability to filter blood effectively.
- Vision loss — High blood pressure can strain or damage blood vessels in the eyes.
- Sexual dysfunction — High blood pressure can lead to erectile dysfunction in men and may contribute to lower libido in women.
- Angina — Over time, high blood pressure can lead to heart disease. Angina, or chest pain, is a common symptom.
- Peripheral artery disease (PAD) — High blood pressure can lead to narrowed arteries in the legs, arms, stomach, and head, causing pain or fatigue.

### **Know Your Numbers**

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure tested. All adults should check their blood pressure every few years, and people over 40 should start checking it at least once a year. Understanding the numbers in your test results is important. You can learn what healthy numbers look like, as recommended by the American Heart Association. Following are the healthy and unhealthy blood pressure ranges:

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC (top number)		DIASTOLIC (bottom number)
<b>NORMAL</b>	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
<b>ELEVATED</b>	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1</b>	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2</b>	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
<b>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (Consult your doctor immediately)</b>	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

### Know Your Plan

If you have high blood pressure, there are many things you can do about it. Educate yourself about high blood pressure and learn how to monitor your blood pressure at home. Work with your healthcare provider to come up with a plan that works for you. Your plan may include getting more exercise, eating healthy foods, limiting salt, and managing stress. Your doctor may also prescribe medicine to help get your blood pressure numbers into a healthy range.

“You can beat high blood pressure,” states Lori Rowley RN, Public Health Nurse for SWNPHD. “Knowing your risk and following a good plan will go a long way toward lowering your chances of having a serious problem like a heart attack or stroke.” Earlier and better treatment of high blood pressure has helped lower death rates from heart disease in the United States, although heart disease is still the number one cause of death in the US and in Nebraska.

Through a grant with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, SWNPHD works with women through a program called Health Hub. Health Hub coaches help women to improve their heart health, check their blood pressure regularly, and monitor their progress toward healthy living. Contact Lori Rowley at 308-345-4223 to sign up for Health Hub.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. The website [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook and Instagram. SWNPHD can be reached by calling 308-345-4223, one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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