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Baby Buzz
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Sarah Gilbreath

[head] Celebrate a healthier you on World Health Day

[deck] This spring, clean up your cardiovascular system as well as your house!

Every year on April 7, the World Health Organization (WHO) celebrates its anniversary with World Health Day. The day highlights a priority area of public concern in the world by outlining the causes of the problem and promoting healthy solutions. This year's focus is high blood pressure, or hypertension.

Hypertension, which is caused by a buildup of plaque in the arteries, is one of the most common health concerns in the world, affecting an average of 1 in 3 adults worldwide. The list of problems caused by high blood pressure is a long and varied one, including everything from increased risk of heart attack, strokes and kidney failure to diabetes, aneurysms and even blindness.

Though an increase in diagnosis and a decrease in the cost of medication for high blood pressure have caused a drop in cases, hypertension is still responsible for an estimated 13% of deaths worldwide. The WHO hopes to decrease that number by raising awareness of the affliction and encouraging adults to get their blood pressure checked.

You can get your blood pressure checked by your doctor or at certain pharmacies. In the meantime, here are some simple ways to keep the gunk out of your veins and make sure your cardiovascular system is squeaky-clean:

-No smoking As if the idea of sticking a bunch of dead leaves coated with tar in your mouth and then lighting the whole thing on fire wasn't gross enough, smoking has also been linked to high blood pressure (among many other health problems). Avoid smoke-filled areas, as second-hand smoke can also be harmful.

-Hold the salt Many people aren't aware of the level of salt they consume every day, mostly because it's present in foods you'd never expect. Because salt is a time-honored preservative, it is used in the manufacturing of almost every processed food, from salad dressing and sun-dried tomatoes to butter and even milk. Always read the label on food before you eat it, and opt for low-sodium varieties whenever possible. Go easy on salt-heavy condiments like ketchup, and opt for fresh food instead of processed.

-Go virgin Now, we know that you expecting moms are avoiding alcohol, but even mothers who have already given birth can benefit from choosing mocktails over cocktails: Studies have shown that high levels of alcohol can cause hypertension, not to mention sending your blood sugar levels soaring.

-Calm down One of the most common causes of hypertension, stress is medically divided into two categories: eustress and distress. Eustress, or “happy stress,” is caused by something positive, such as a wedding or party. Distress, the negative stress, can be caused by frustrations at work or problems at home. *Both* can negatively affect your health if not handled properly. Try managing your stress with yoga, a hot bath or some calming tea.

-Lighten up Maintaining a healthy weight is key to a healthy body. Eating a balanced diet and getting moderate exercise regularly will strengthen your heart and put less pressure on your cardiovascular system. With the weather finally warming up, it's the perfect time for a hike, bike ride or even just a walk outside. Strap on your sneakers and get moving!

For more information about World Health Day 2013, visit <http://www.who.int/world-health-day/en/> .