

Silent killer: high blood pressure

by Robert Lothian

Over 60 million Americans suffer from high blood pressure. The so-called "silent killer" strikes one out of three Black Americans and one out of four whites.

If uncontrolled, hypertension, as high blood pressure is technically known, can lead to heart attack, heart failure, stroke and kidney failure. The effects are more severe among Black people: two and a half times as many Blacks as whites between the ages of 25 and 64 die from stroke, a major complication of high blood pressure.

No one knows the exact cause of high blood pressure or why it affects Black people more than whites. "In 90 percent of the cases, there is no known cause," said Judy Harris, an RN and director of nursing and health at the new Red Cross Center on North Vancouver Avenue.

Harris teaches volunteers who in turn lead blood pressure classes. Community residents can get "The Low-down on High Blood Pressure" in a five-week session beginning Oct. 21st from 7-9 p.m. at the center, 3131 N. Vancouver. The class will help participants effectively control high blood pressure and adjust to changes in lifestyle that treatment may require.

People who need a blood pressure check — and Harris recommends a check at least once a year and as often as once a month if it is elevated — can get it done for free at the N.E. Health Center, 5329 N.E. Union, and at Bethany Lutheran Church, 4330 N.E. 37th Ave.

Harris said that high blood pressure results when the arteries constrict or are blocked for some reason, causing the heart to "pump through a narrowed hose." The pressure rises as the heart pumps harder. "It's harder on the heart and that constant pressure causes the vessels to become damaged," Harris said.

"Chronic, long-term stress seems to be a factor in high blood pressure. But even if you are a very calm, laid back person you can still have it." She added that a cholesterol build-up in the arteries can cause a rise in pressure. "But there are people who don't eat cholesterol that don't have high blood pressure," she said. "One of the problems is that there are no symptoms, and that's one of the things we need to get across to people."

The complications of high blood pressure seem for the most part to affect people over 40, Harris said. "But a lot of young people have it," and hypertension is "real common" among Black men in their 20s, she said. Harris said she had noticed that Northeast residents seem to develop high blood pressure at an earlier age than normal, both men and women. When someone comes in for a check who is overweight, she said, she can almost guess ahead of time that they will have high blood pressure. Sur-

prisingly, in a study of 1,500 6-year-old school children, 7 percent had elevated blood pressure readings, according to Harris.

The effects of hypertension can be treated if the disease is recognized early, which is where regular checks come in. Harris advised those concerned about high blood pressure to watch their weight, cut their cholesterol and sodium intake, see a doctor regularly and follow his instructions for treatment, and not to smoke.

Minority Report: Food spending in U.S. households

by Rufus Wells • U.S. Department of Agriculture

In 1981, the households in the lowest 20 percent of the income distribution spent \$12.28 per person for food at home compared with \$16.03 for households in the highest 20 percent. In general, wealthier households spent more on most food items and purchased a greater variety.

Seasonal purchases varied more per person for items with seasonal production patterns, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, and for products used heavily during holiday

periods such as sugar and alcoholic beverages. Major food groups showed less seasonality than did subgroups. Households were more likely to purchase steak and ground beef during the summer and roasts during the winter. Households bought fresh tomatoes less frequently in the summer and fall than in the spring, possibly because of the prevalence of home gardening. Ice cream and beverage purchases also varied seasonally.

In 1980 and 1981, nonwhites

spent less per person on food at home, food away from home, and dairy products than did whites. Nonwhites, however, spent more on poultry products and on fish and shellfish.

Americans spent an average of \$20.03 per week on food in 1981 compared with \$18.95 in 1980. This weekly spending rose from \$12.82 to \$13.53 per person for food at home and from \$6.11 to \$6.50 for food away from home.

Married couples with children

spent less per person on food eaten both at home and away from home. Single-parent households headed by men spent more per person than those headed by women.

Residents of the Northeast spent the most per person on food at home. Westerners spent the most per person on food away from home. However, elderly households spent more than the national average on total food as well as on food at home.



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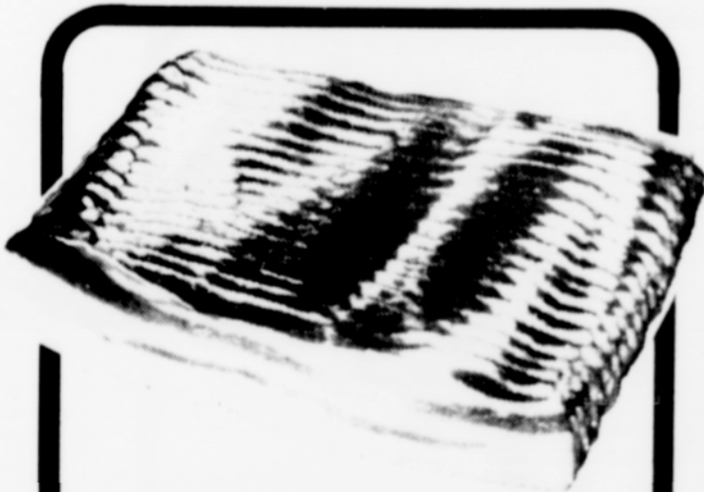
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