

High Blood Pressure & Stroke Awareness Month

Why Employers Should Take Action

May is High Blood Pressure and Stroke Awareness Month

— During this month, people are encouraged to know their blood pressure numbers, adopt heart-healthy habits like daily physical activity and balanced nutrition, limit sodium (salt) intake by choosing lower-sodium packaged foods and checking Nutrition Facts labels, avoid tobacco/nicotine use, and manage stress.

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is often called the “silent killer” because it usually has no warning signs or symptoms. Yet it is one of the leading risk factors for stroke and heart disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly half of adults in the United States have high blood pressure, and many do not even know it. The risk of high blood pressure increases sharply with age. Many people with normal readings in their 20s and 30s may develop hypertension later in life, especially after 60—so prevention and regular monitoring matter.

A stroke happens when blood flow to the brain is blocked or a blood vessel in the brain bursts. It can cause permanent brain damage, disability, or death. The American Stroke Association (ASA) emphasizes that up to 80% of strokes are preventable through healthy lifestyle

How Are High Blood Pressure and Stroke Connected?

High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke. Over time, elevated blood pressure damages and weakens blood vessels throughout the body, including those in the brain. This damage can:

- Cause arteries to narrow or become blocked by clots (leading to an [ischemic stroke](#))
- Weaken blood vessel walls until they burst (causing a [hemorrhagic stroke](#))
- Reduce oxygen supply to brain tissue- brain cells start to die within minutes

The ASA reports that managing blood pressure is one of the most important steps you can take to prevent a stroke. Today and every day, take control of your blood pressure — because protecting your heart also protects your brain. A simple blood pressure check could prevent a life-changing stroke.

How Employers Can Support Workforce Heart Health

For employers, the impact extends beyond healthcare costs. Poorly managed blood pressure and stroke risk can contribute to:

- Increased absenteeism
- Higher healthcare and disability costs
- Reduced productivity
- Long-term chronic disease complications
- Increased risk of stroke and heart disease

The good news? Many strokes and cardiovascular events are preventable through early detection, healthy lifestyle support, and access to evidence-based care.

Employers can play a meaningful role by promoting preventive care and creating a culture of health. Consider encouraging employees to:

- ✓ Know and monitor their blood pressure numbers
- ✓ Utilize preventive screenings and primary care services
- ✓ Increase physical activity and healthy eating habits
- ✓ Manage stress and improve sleep habits
- ✓ Quit tobacco and nicotine use
- ✓ Learn the warning signs of stroke using the **F.A.S.T.** method:

Face drooping | Arm weakness | Speech difficulty | Time to call 911



Employer Takeaway

This month is an opportunity for employers to reinforce the importance of prevention, encourage healthier lifestyles, and support employees in managing chronic conditions before they become life-changing health events.

Supporting employee heart health is not only good for employees and families — it is also good for workforce well-being, productivity, and long-term organizational health.



Helpful Employer Resources

HCTN No-Cost Employer Pilot Opportunity:

HealthCareTN (HCTN) continues to support employers through **no-cost** pilots. HCTN Employer Members have access to evidence-based workforce health pilots. The Omada Hypertension & Cardiometabolic Program Pilot is a virtual program designed to help employees manage high blood pressure, improve heart health, and build sustainable healthy habits through coaching, monitoring tools, and lifestyle support. (Contact HCTN for more information)

Employer Resources to Share:

- *Stroke Risk Factors Under Your Control* (ASA)
- *High Blood Pressure and Stroke* (ASA)
- *Resources for Caregivers, Family & Friends* (ASA)
- *Health Effects of Cigarettes: Cardiovascular Disease* (CDC)
- *How to Measure Your Blood Pressure at Home* (AHA) – video
- *What Your Blood Pressure Numbers Mean* (AHA) – video
- *What Happens During a Stroke?* – video
- CDC High Blood Pressure Resources
<https://www.cdc.gov/high-blood-pressure/index.html>
- American Stroke Association – Stroke Prevention Resources
<https://www.stroke.org/en/about-stroke/stroke-risk-factors/stroke-prevention>
- American Heart Association – Life's Essential 8
<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/lifes-essential-8>
- *Diabetes and Stroke Prevention* (ASA)
- *Help and Support After a Stroke* – (ASA)
- *Tennessee Tobacco Quit Line* (TDH)
- *Types of Blood Pressure Medications* (AHA)
- *High Blood Pressure Basics* (CDC) – video
- *Types of Strokes* (ASA)
- *Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)* (ASA)
- *Healthy Heart Ambassador Program*