

Hypertension awareness and May Measurement Month

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Hypertension at par denotes a pumped-up circulatory system. It presents a delightful harmony, maintaining perfusion during times of increased demand. However, as time passes, circulatory overworking results in wear and tear and eventually culminates in a tragic and dreadful ending, damaging the arteries and setting the scene for serious complications. This plot of the story unfolds occasionally with debut of giddiness, dizziness, shortness of breath, fatigue, and chest pain. However, customarily hypertension remains featureless and asymptomatic as a silent art. Hypertension builds up its character like a lurking storm that quietly sneaks up on people's health without apparent symptoms and mutely wreaks havoc on the body, like a torpid character secretly plotting against and taking control, producing disastrous health effects. Thus, hypertension gets its ominous epithet "The Silent Killer".

Being silent, hypertension remains a formidable health concern universally as it affects 1.3 billion adults between 30 - 79 years, with two-thirds residing in low to middle-income countries.¹ The prevalence of hypertension in a community is an indirect indicator of calamitous health problems like heart diseases, cerebrovascular accidents, kidney diseases, vision loss, dementia, and others. Apart from genetics, improper diet, physical inactivity, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, obesity, and stress foster the overall rise in the burden of hypertension.² Hence, fixing hypertension demands more than just access to healthcare or medical treatment. It requires a cumulative endeavor in lifestyle awareness and preventive measures.³

World Hypertension Day is celebrated every May 17, and "May Measurement Month" was invented to boost awareness regarding hypertension. Apart from hypertension screening, this global campaign aims to raise hypertension awareness. The prevalence of hypertension in our community has improved over time.⁴ This transformation of prevalence from one-half of the population to one-third of the population is brought about by an improved healthcare system, healthy lifestyle, and care cascade through health awareness campaigns, which further depend on factors like healthcare access, socioeconomic status, educational background, and cultural beliefs.^{5,6}

Health awareness sparks positive changes that inspire action, shape attitude, and bring meaningful changes by transforming societies and individuals.⁷ Educating people about hypertension and its significant health impacts makes them more conscious of their actions and imparts a culture of responsibility and empathy. These initiatives empower individuals to make informed decisions, avoid repeating past mistakes, and adopt innovative solutions, thus shifting their attitudes and behaviors. Beyond the bounds, all committed and inspired people unite and act to uplift the community. They connect knowledge gaps, spur dialogue, and implement policy changes that can lead to enduring improvements. Such awareness programs save countless lives by prompting early detection and preventive care. It can be felt in many different shapes and forms and can induce a ripple effect, thus validating that transformation is sparked by awareness. To summarize, informed people are empowered, and an empowered community is a force for change, hope, and opportunity.⁸

The battle against hypertension begins with awareness. Fostering healthy lifestyle and mitigating risk factors for hypertension results in overall good health thus preventing complications.³ It's never too late to make a change. Even small steps taken today towards a healthier tomorrow are worth it. Moreover, keeping tabs on one's blood pressure is an astute strategy as hypertension remains reticent⁹

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