

THE TADDLER

Individual Hypertension Counselling Sessions

By: Vicki McGregor, RN



Blood Pressure 101

(Information adapted from Hypertension Canada - <https://www.hypertension.ca/en/public>)

What is blood pressure?

Your heart pumps blood around your body through your blood vessels, similar to water travelling through a hose. Blood pressure is the force of blood against your blood vessels as it circulates through your body.

What do blood pressure numbers mean?

The top number is your systolic blood pressure and is the highest level of pressure reached as your heart pumps the blood through your blood vessels. The bottom number is your diastolic blood pressure and is the lowest level of pressure as your heart relaxes between beats.

What should my blood pressure be?

Hypertension Canada provides research-based guidelines for healthy blood pressure levels:

- Adults' blood pressure should be less than 140/90
- Blood pressure for people with diabetes should be less than 130/80
- Higher blood pressure levels may be accepted for people over 80 years old

Do I Need to Worry About Blood Pressure?



What causes high blood pressure?

Some risk factors for high blood pressure, like family history, age and gender cannot be changed. Other risk factors are controllable, like smoking, alcohol intake, exercise, stress, diet, salt intake and body weight.

What is hypertension?

Hypertension is a specific medical condition in which blood pressure measures consistently above target. It is often called "the silent killer" as it has no warning signs or symptoms. It can affect anyone and is more common as we age.

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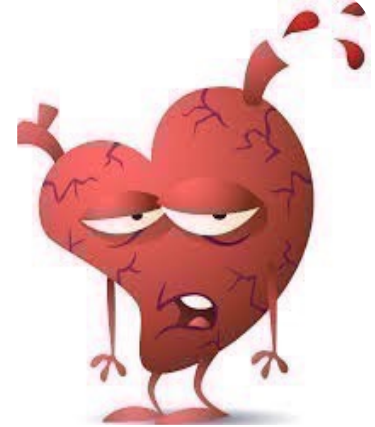
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How is hypertension harmful to your health?

Over time, too much pressure causes damage to your blood vessels and body organs (for example, kidneys and eyes).

Uncontrolled hypertension increases your risk of:

- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Heart failure
- Dementia
- Kidney disease
- Eye problems (retinopathy)
- Erectile dysfunction
- Diabetes



Lifestyle strategies for reducing blood pressure:

- Reduce daily salt/sodium consumption to less than 2000 mg of sodium per day
- Eat a healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy weight (Body Mass Index: 18.5-24.9)
- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes, five to six days per week
- Refrain from smoking
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Aim for stress-free living
- If diagnosed with hypertension, take blood pressure medications as prescribed and check in regularly with your doctor or nurse practitioner

Individual Hypertension Counselling Sessions at Taddle Creek Family Health Team

Taddle Creek Family Health Team offers one-to-one in-depth hypertension counselling sessions with our registered nurses and pharmacists to help you learn more about hypertension and to develop a personalized Hypertension Action Plan. Please call your doctor or nurse practitioner's office if you would like more information about these sessions or to book your one-hour appointment.

Who the hypertension counselling sessions are for:

- You may be referred by your family doctor or nurse practitioner if your blood pressure measurements are too high or are close to the cut-off
- Self-referral: Please call your doctor or nurse practitioner's office to book your own appointment if you have had high blood pressure measurements, measurements close to the cut-off or have hypertension. Both patients who are and are not on blood pressure medications are welcome.



How to prepare for the counselling session:

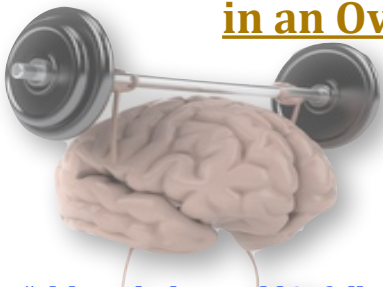
- Avoid tobacco and caffeine for at least 1 hour before your appointment
- Avoid exercise and vigorous activity for at least 30 minutes before your appointment. Please try to arrive early to your appointment so that you can rest prior to measuring your blood pressure.

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Mental Health Corner

Cultivating Calm and Compassion in an Overwhelming World

by: Anseh Dibaji, MSW, RSW



“Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it” - Helen Keller

I know that I am not alone in periodically feeling overwhelmed by the bombardment of endless terrible news and sorrow that comes through the various forms of media. There is so much upheaval and suffering in the world; refugee crises, mass shootings and terrorism, the rise of nationalism and Nazism, the continued destruction of our natural environments, human rights abuses and something dubbed “post-Trump election distress syndrome”. Our 24-hour news cycle and non-stop exposure to the deluge of suffering in the wider world and in our own community can inevitably lead to exhaustion and burnout.

Researchers have found that our brains are like *Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positive ones*. The negativity bias of the brain makes us vigilant and sensitive to any negative or dangerous stimulus (real or imagined) and our brains are primed to activate the fight, flight and freeze system. The constant messages we receive about the world being a dangerous, uncertain and unjust place can easily lead us into a negative, downward spiral and can bring about a collective anxious, helpless and depressed state. Perceiving much suffering may lead us to empathic distress and helplessness; we may get stuck in “fight” and experience a lot of moral outrage and anger; “flight” may manifest in our avoidant behaviours; and “freeze” may feel like a numbing or dissociation. This makes us more vulnerable to vicarious trauma, depression, anxiety and addiction.

What do we do about this? We cannot necessarily change the headlines but we can change the impact they have on us. There is much research in the area of neuroplasticity that shows that our brains change across the lifespan based on our experiences and what we practice. We can train and change our brains for the better with focused attention and reflective and compassion-focused practices. Research shows that a contemplative practice, such as mindfulness or meditation, can help us to improve our insight into our brains and bodies and can liberate us from the moral distress and futility that we may be feeling. We can also learn to better differentiate our own experience from the suffering of others and feel less helpless, more grounded and be able to take wise action.

Research in the area of meditation and neuroscience shows that focused attention, open presence and mettā (loving-kindness/compassion) training practices can help us to be sensitive to the deep suffering of our fellow humans without necessarily becoming hyper-aroused. It is important to differentiate empathy from compassion. Empathy is being able to understand how another person feels and being able to put ourselves in their shoes and imagine how it would feel for us. Empathy is not enough. Compassion takes it further; we can feel what the other person feels and we are able to hold their suffering and take some kind of action. The action does not have to be big or significant; in fact, it may only be to wish the other person loving-kindness by silently repeating phrases that acknowledge our connectedness and also our deep wish that the person be well. Phrases may include “may you be happy, may you be safe, may you live with ease, may you be free from suffering”. It is also important to include ourselves in the circle of compassion and to offer the phrases inward.

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Caregiver and Seniors Resources

By: Andrea Filip, PA

As the number of adults over the age of 65 continues to rise, more and more people choose or are forced into the role of caregiver for a partner, parent, grandparent or other loved one. Unfortunately, this can result in caregiver burnout, of which signs include depression, withdrawal, anxiety and anger. For caregivers working and raising their own children, the addition of the caregiver role can equate to 3 full-time jobs, resulting in significant stress and lack of time for self-care.

Thankfully, there are many resources and supports to help caregivers care for both themselves and their loved ones. We have created two lists (see end of Taddler Newsletter) of local caregiver support programs, day programs, respite care, home care services, etc. We hope these lists assist caregivers to be aware of and get access to services available.

Remember, if you are struggling to care for a loved one, you do not have to do it alone. Doing it alone may lead to 'burnout' and your own personal health issues due to self-neglect. It is important that you seek help early to ensure that you and your loved one(s) receive the best care and supports possible.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TADDLE CREEK

By: Sherry Kennedy, *Executive Director*

This column lets you know about TC FHT programs, events and announcements.

Programs

I am excited to announce a partnership between The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and TC FHT's Mental Health Program, as of January 2018. This partnership will provide quicker access to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Groups at TC FHT for patients suffering from mild to moderate depression and anxiety. The partnership was already put into action with two 10-week CBT Groups in January that were hosted at TC FHT and facilitated by CAMH clinicians. It is important to note that TC FHT continues to offer CBT Groups for patients suffering from more severe symptoms of depression and anxiety.

I am also excited to announce a second partnership established between Leadership Sinai Centre for Diabetes and TC FHT's Diabetes Education Program (DEP). This partnership will provide diabetes education/services for women with gestational diabetes. Our TC FHT's DEP looks forward to welcoming its first patient with gestational diabetes later this month.

TC FHT will be offering spring groups and workshops. These will be posted on our website calendar (<http://taddlecreekfht.ca/patients/event-calendar/>) in late Feb/Mar 2018.

To learn more about a group or workshop, visit the individual program. For example, to learn about the Mental Health Program's groups/workshops, you would go to <http://taddlecreekfht.ca/programs/mental-health/>.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TADDLE CREEK

Cont'd from page 4

We continue to offer Single-Session Drop-In Counselling Clinics (mental health support) at Bay on Fridays from 9am-12pm and at Bloor on Tuesdays from 1:15-3:15pm.

To learn more, visit http://taddlecreekfht.ca/services/single-session-drop-in-clinic/?ref_program=mental-health.

Events

In July 2015, TC FHT purchased **Health Myself (HM)**, a patient/provider portal that offers 3 electronic engagement tools: secure email, appointment reminders and e-booking. Not all TC FHT providers offer HM or provide access to all three tools, but I'm confident that in the future we will see all providers offering all HM tools to all patients. With that being said, I'm happy to let you know about an event that happened on Jan. 29, 2018. On Jan. 29, 2018, Drs. Shaw, Biancucci & Valentinis, Shauna Sturgeon, NP and Victoria Charko, RN (all located in Suite 522) started to offer e-booking.

If you would like to be sent an HM invitation, talk to a medical secretary or a provider at your next visit to TC FHT.

Announcements

Jennifer Schneider has been hired as a Registered Dietitian for a 1-year contract for Julia Stanislavskaia's maternity leave. Jennifer earned a Masters of Public Health, Community Nutrition from the University of Toronto in 2014. She also has 3.5 years of community experience in a dietitian role (worked at Unison Health & Community Services and Black Creek CHC). Jennifer will be with us from Dec. 11, 2017 until Dec. 28, 2018.

Welcome aboard.

Cont'd from page 2 (Individual Hypertension Counselling Sessions)

What to expect from the counselling session:

- An initial one-hour appointment with a nurse or pharmacist
- We begin the appointment by measuring your blood pressure. You will be left alone in a room to relax, while the machine takes a series of six blood pressure measurements over a 10-15 minute period.
- We will discuss your result, what it means and how it relates to the blood pressure guidelines
- Instructions for home blood pressure monitoring may be discussed
- Lifestyle factors that influence blood pressure will be reviewed in detail. You will be given handouts to take home with you.
- We will help you develop a personalized Hypertension Action Plan by helping you identify your lifestyle goals to reduce your blood pressure
- Your doctor or nurse practitioner will be notified of your blood pressure result and action plan
- A follow-up appointment will be arranged with the nurse or pharmacist about 3 months later to check in on your progress, measure your blood pressure and provide further support if required



Cont'd from page 3 (Cultivating Calm and Compassion)

Research shows that the brains of those who have at least 10,000 hours of meditation practice which included focused attention and mettā (loving-kindness/compassion), when exposed to another person's distress and suffering, seemed to be able to acutely experience the others' suffering but their brains were also able to let go of it quickly. Brains trained in meditation and loving-kindness/compassion appear to be better able to process uncertainty, have better psychological flexibility and emotional processing, have increased grey matter, as well as a whole host of other impressive benefits. The implications of the research are profound and can be of great benefit to anyone working in a helping profession, caregivers and all human beings who run the risk of emotional burnout.

Other than contemplative practices, we can improve our wellbeing by practicing good self-care in terms of our diet, exercise and sleep, as well as scheduling opportunities for play/fun and relaxation. It may also be helpful to reflect on how to create a balance between our need to be informed vs. our psychological wellbeing and learn how to practice having better boundaries with the media we consume. Other helpful stress-reducing strategies include strengthening our social connections, being of service and volunteering to help in our local and wider communities, connecting to nature and the natural world, practicing gratitude, etc.

We can learn how to practice loving-kindness, compassion and gratitude as opposed to cynicism, despair and negativity. These practices are able to support our resiliency so that we feel more grounded and can better help ourselves and each other, and be able to respond and take action on the profound social, political and environmental issues in our world. Training in meditation and loving-kindness/compassion-focused practices can help create the foundation for a more peaceful, just and loving world. May you and all beings be peaceful, safe, happy, live with ease and be free from suffering.

References / More to Explore:

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A Patient's Experience with Diabetes

By: Julio Perez Munoz (patient contribution)

When my doctor told me that I was well on my path to diabetes, I panicked. It felt like I was being pushed from the edge of a cliff.

My breakfast was three or four burritos and a big cup of coffee with half a litre of milk, and if no one was looking, I would also have a chocolate bar (my favourite, Mr. Big). This pattern of eating continued all day with exaggerated poor choices loaded with sugar. Sometimes, the time between meals would not even be 1 hour. Sudden and incredibly annoying mood swings were my norm. At times, I despised myself and would lash out at everything and anything.

I have seen diabetes in others; I have seen it in my family and in close friends and I have seen how they have experienced the slow decay and weakening of once strong and robust bodies when their diabetes was not controlled. The father of one of my closest friends, once a strong, lucid and resourceful man, was reduced to a shadow of what he once was and then he died.

*Diabetes is bad.
Diabetes does not discriminate.*

So, of course, I panicked when I heard I was on the path to diabetes. I was afraid because I know sugar is like an addiction, it hooks you up and grabs your mind, but here is the best part:

*This damage can be reversed.
This enemy can be defeated.
You can be whole again.*

My path took me to Taddle Creek Family Health Team's Diabetes Education Program. What did I hear?

Don't go jumping headfirst into fads and shiny answers.

I know you want change now but believe me when I tell you:

you need to start with small changes, take baby steps.

We can make a plan together.

With the help of Taddle Creek and my doctor I made it to safety, and after I made important changes, I couldn't go back to my old ways. The Diabetes Education Program clinicians listen to you and work with you to find the best approach for you. The clinicians are genuine, attentive and supportive.

This has been my experience with diabetes and I want other people starting out on this path to know that it doesn't matter how daunting and difficult it seems,

*It does get easier with time.
It gets better.
But you have to really want to change and take charge.*



Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for the Prevention of HIV

By: Victoria O'Neill, NP

PrEP is a pre-exposure prophylaxis antiviral medication that can reduce the chance of getting HIV when it is coupled with safer sex practices and routine medical appointments. The medication is only effective if taken consistently every day as prescribed. PrEP can stop HIV from taking hold and spreading throughout the body. Daily use of PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by more than 90%, especially if condoms and other prevention methods are used. A risk reduction among people who inject drugs is more than 70%. After trials and studies, PrEP was approved by the World Health Organization in 2012.

PrEP is used for patients that are at high risk of acquiring HIV infection. Examples are: gay or bisexual men who have an HIV positive partner, have multiple partners, are not using condoms or have had recent sexually transmitted infections (STIs); heterosexuals who have an HIV positive partner, have multiple partners with unknown HIV status or do not always use condoms; and people that inject drugs and share needles or have partners that inject drugs.

PrEP is a combination medication (tenofovir disproxil fumarate 300mg and emtricitabine 200mg) sold under the name Truvada®. Truvada® has shown to be safe and effective in reducing the risk of HIV in adults, however currently, the data on efficacy and safety for adolescents is insufficient. Truvada® is approximately \$1000/month, but there are generic forms costing approximately \$268/month. Many insurance plans fully cover or partially cover the drug. As of September 28, 2017, the medication is covered by the Ontario Drug Benefit program and OHIP Plus for young adults 25 years and younger.

The medication is generally well-tolerated. Some possible side effects include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache and dizziness. In clinical trials, these side effects were generally mild and temporary and only affected 1-10% of subjects. There is also a small risk of decrease to kidney, liver and bone health. The changes were reversible once the medication was stopped.

If you are interested in starting PrEP, you can ask your primary care provider for more information. If your provider feels you are at high risk and would benefit from the medication, you will first need to do STI screening and testing for hepatitis, kidney function and HIV status before initiating the medication.

You will be given a 3-month supply of the medication and will need to be reassessed every 3 months prior to getting a prescription renewal. These regular appointments are necessary in order to be tested for HIV and other STIs, monitored for drug side effects, and to receive ongoing adherence and risk reduction counselling.

So if you feel PrEP might be right for you, book an appointment with your primary care provider to discuss it further.

Resources/References:

CDC-website PrEP resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/predprovidersupplement2017>

Catie.ca-Canada's source for HIV and Hepatitis C information

Up-to-date-HIV PrEP

www.thesexyouwant.ca



Choosing Wisely Canada Campaign

By: Dr. Christina M. Biancucci, MD, CCFP

Nearly four years ago, an exciting national campaign was launched called “Choosing Wisely Canada.” The campaign’s goal is to “help clinicians and patients engage in conversations about unnecessary tests and treatments, and make smart and effective care choices.”¹ The Choosing Wisely initiative started in the United States in 2012 and there are now 20 countries participating.

Choosing Wisely Canada has published lists of recommendations for clinicians and patients for many different medical specialties, which “identify tests and treatments commonly used in each specialty that are not supported by evidence and could expose patients to harm.”¹ The list of recommendations for Family Medicine can be found here: <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/family-medicine>.

In this winter edition of The Taddler, with the cold and flu season among us, we are highlighting Choosing Wisely Canada’s Family Medicine Recommendation #2: “Don’t use antibiotics for upper respiratory infections that are likely viral in origin, such as influenza-like illness, or self-limiting, such as sinus infections of less than seven days of duration.” The article that follows (printed with permission from Choosing Wisely Canada) provides some additional information about treating sinus infections specifically and how antibiotics can often be avoided.

For more information on Choosing Wisely Canada, including ways that you as a patient can become involved, you can visit <https://choosingwiselycanada.org>.

Sources:

1. Choosing Wisely Canada Website. <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/about/>
2. Treating Sinus Infections: Don’t rush to antibiotics. <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/treating-sinusitis/>

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The purpose of the TC FHT Newsletter, “The Taddler” is to provide:

Education on varied health-related topics
Regular communication about what is happening at TC FHT
Information on issues that impact TC FHT and its patients
A means for patients to get acquainted with TC FHT team members
An avenue for patient contribution
We hope you enjoy reading it!

**The Taddler is not for private marketing purposes*