

3 Things Every Woman Should Ask Her Physician

by Bend Weekly News Sources

If your obstetrician-gynecologist is also your primary physician, then your conversation should extend beyond reproductive health to include other health risks specific to women, such as high blood pressure.

High blood pressure is an often-overlooked and easily detected risk factor that affects more than 39 million American women. Most women are astonished to learn that 80 percent of middle-aged women, ages 40 to 60, have one or more risk factors for heart disease, including high blood pressure.

Elevated blood pressure is one of the most common risk factors for heart disease in middle-age women. According to the American Heart Association, the risk for high blood pressure increases faster in women than men as they age. In fact, the risk of a woman developing high blood pressure after menopause is three times greater than it is for a man of the same age.

The good news is that high blood pressure can be successfully managed. Lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise are always recommended for people with high blood pressure. Most people, however, will require medication to help get their blood pressure within healthy ranges.

"It is so important for women to talk to their doctors about high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease, even if that doctor is their OB-GYN," said Dr. Elizabeth Ofili, professor of medicine and chief of cardiology at Morehouse School of Medicine. "It is important to learn about monitoring your blood pressure and reducing your cholesterol, in addition to the benefits of breast self-examinations and PAP tests."

Here are three important questions to ask at your next doctor appointment:

- * Am I at risk for high blood pressure?

- * What is a healthy blood pressure goal for me, and how do I reach and maintain that goal?

- * How will my blood pressure affect my cardiovascular health?

Treating high blood pressure can go a long way in preventing heart disease and stroke. Even making a slight blood pressure reduction can reduce the risk of suffering a first cardiovascular event, and for every decrease of

20/10 millimeters of mercury, the risk is cut in half.

For more information about reaching your blood pressure goal, talk with your doctor or visit www.bpsuccesszone.com.

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