Monthly Strides
Taking strides to better your health

May Issue Includes
- National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
- Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month
- National High Blood Pressure Month

National Physical Activity and Sports Month
All adults should participate in some physical activity, according to the President’s Council on Fitness and Sports.

Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week. You can break that down into 30 minute sessions five days a week, or simply aim for being active at least 20 minutes or more every day.

For additional low-, moderate- and vigorous-intensity recommendations, log on to www.fitness.gov.

Also, visit StayWell Online at https://uclivingwell.online.staywell.com and click on “Physical Activity” under “Health Centers” to learn more.

Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month
Asthma is a disease of the lungs in which the airways become blocked or narrowed causing breathing difficulty.

Allergies are diseases of the immune system that cause an overreaction to substances called “allergens.” Allergies are grouped by the kind of trigger, time of year or where symptoms appear on the body. Some examples include indoor or outdoor allergies (also called “hay fever,” “seasonal,” “perennial” or “nasal” allergies), food and drug allergies, latex allergies, insect allergies, skin allergies and eye allergies. People who have allergies can live healthy and active lives.

Log on to www.aafa.org to learn more about ways to treat Asthma and Allergies and what you can do to live healthy with these conditions.

Visit StayWell Online at https://uclivingwell.online.staywell.com and select “Asthma” under “Health Centers” or do a search of “Allergies” for more information.

National High Blood Pressure Month
High blood pressure is a serious condition that can lead to coronary heart disease, heart failure, stroke, kidney failure, and other health problems. Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps out blood. If this pressure rises and stays high over time, it can damage the body in many ways.

High blood pressure is dangerous because it often goes undetected. Make it your goal this month to get your blood pressure checked. For more information about high blood pressure, log on to www.nhlbi.nih.gov.

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Monthly WellTips

May is National High Blood Pressure Month

According the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, “blood pressure” is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps out blood. If this pressure rises and stays high over time, it can damage the body in many ways. About 1 in 3 adults in the United States has high blood pressure (HBP). HBP itself usually has no symptoms. You can have it for years without knowing it. During this time, it can damage the heart, blood vessels, kidneys, and other parts of your body. Knowing your blood pressure numbers is important, even when you’re feeling fine. If your blood pressure is too high, you need treatment to prevent damage to your body’s organs.

What causes HBP? The cause of HBP is not known. In most cases, HBP can be prevented or controlled by changing factors (called risk factors) that contribute to its development. Not all risk factors can be changed, but many can. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chance of developing HPB (also known as hypertension), so it’s important to change the ones you can.

Controllable Risk Factors for High Blood Pressure

**Weight** - Being overweight increases your risk of developing HBP. In fact, blood pressure rises as body weight increases. Losing even 10 pounds can lower blood pressure.

**Smoking** - Each time you smoke a cigarette, your blood pressure rises. Smoking increases your risk of coronary heart disease.

**Activity** - Exercise strengthens your heart, lungs and muscles, relieves stress and helps lower blood pressure.

**Healthy eating** - Following a healthy eating plan can both reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure and lower an already elevated blood pressure.

**Stress** - Stress can make blood pressure go up temporarily, and it may contribute to HBP. But its long-term effects are not clear. Stress management techniques do not seem to prevent high blood pressure.

**Salt** - Most people consume much more salt and sodium than they need and a lot of sodium in your diet contributes to rises in blood pressure. The current recommendation is to consume less than 1 teaspoon of salt a day. That includes all salt, monosodium glutamate, baking powder and baking soda.

**Alcohol** - Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure and harm your liver, brain and heart.

**Oral contraceptives** - Women taking oral contraceptives have a small increase in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure; usually these are still in the normal range.

Blood Pressure Resources:

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

StayWell Online

[https://uclivingwell.online.staywell.com](https://uclivingwell.online.staywell.com)