



PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS URGE FLORIDIANS TO KEEP BLOOD PRESSURE IN CHECK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2, 2022

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Okeechobee, FL — Each year, the Florida Department of Health recognizes February as Heart Month, a time to increase heart disease awareness and promote prevention and treatment at home and in the community. This year public health officials are urging Floridians to keep their blood pressure in check by knowing their numbers. Preventing high blood pressure, which is also called hypertension, can lower one's risk for heart disease and stroke.

Nationally, as well as for Florida, more people die each year from heart disease than from any other cause. High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a leading risk factor for heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, and other health problems. An estimated one in two people in the United States has high blood pressure and one in four has their blood pressure under control.

Blood pressure can be measured by a healthcare provider, at a pharmacy, or at home using a blood pressure monitor. According to the most recent [guidelines](#), a normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mmHg. Elevated blood pressure is 120 to 129 mmHg and less than 80 mmHg. Hypertension is blood pressure that is greater than 130/80 mmHg.

"It's never too early or too late to take steps to being the healthiest you.

Get you blood pressure checked, exercise regularly, don't smoke, eat healthy, and minimize stress. Partner with family and friends, let's make being heart healthy our goal for ourselves and those around us," said Bret Smith, County Health Officer.

County Fire Chief Ralph Franklin reminds everyone that monitoring your blood pressure is essential for good health. He reminds everyone that Free Blood Pressure Checks are available at all County Fire Rescue Stations during normal business hours. "In addition to checking your blood pressure, as a service to our citizens, we also provide a card to help you track your blood pressure" said Ralph Franklin, County Fire Chief.

In addition to hypertension, the risk of heart disease is increased by unhealthy diets, particularly those high in salt, added sugars, and low levels of physical activity. Tobacco use is also one of the main risk factors, contributing to around 10% of all deaths.

Heart disease and hypertension can be prevented and managed by practicing healthy living habits, such as eating healthy, staying active, not smoking, checking cholesterol, limiting alcohol use, controlling blood pressure, managing stress, and talking with one's healthcare team. More information on how to manage blood pressure and prevent heart disease can be found on [FloridaHealth.gov](https://www.floridahealth.gov).

The Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County and the Okeechobee County Public Library are holding a Heart Month activity at the following location.

- Free Blood Pressure Checks, February 16, 2022, from 2 p.m. until 4 p.m. at Okeechobee County Library, 206 SW 16th Street, Okeechobee.

In addition to these Heart Month events, any member of the public may obtain a free blood pressure check at the following locations throughout the year.

- Okeechobee County Fire Rescue Station 1, 501 NW 6th Street, Okeechobee
- Okeechobee County Fire Rescue Station 2, 3511 SE 38th Avenue, Okeechobee
- Okeechobee County Fire Rescue Station 3, 1199 NE 168th Street, Okeechobee

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About the Florida Department of Health

The Florida Department of Health, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](https://www.fda.gov/oc/ohrt/), works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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