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July 29, 2020

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Oklahoma HMO shares health information on “silent killers”

High cholesterol, hypertension can lead to deadly diseases, especially during COVID-19 pandemic

OKLAHOMA – With heart disease and stroke the two leading causes of death for American adults, it is important for Oklahomans to be aware of two “silent killers” that increase these risks – high cholesterol and high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. Nearly one in three American adults has high cholesterol and nearly half of American adults have high blood pressure with only a quarter having the condition under control, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

GlobalHealth, an Oklahoma-based health insurance provider, is taking an opportunity to educate Oklahomans of the risks of high blood pressure and high cholesterol, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Early findings suggest high blood pressure could raise the risk of contracting the coronavirus, especially in seniors, and it could raise the risk of experiencing severe complications regardless of age.

“Known as ‘silent killers’ because both diseases have no to very limited symptoms, hypertension and high cholesterol could put you at risk without you even knowing it,” said Dr. Wesley Williams, medical director at GlobalHealth. “It is imperative for Oklahomans to work with their primary care physicians to check their cholesterol and blood pressure levels regularly. Now especially with the COVID-19 pandemic still present, it’s another reason to take these two diseases seriously.”

What is hypertension? Hypertension is when blood pressure is consistently higher than normal, over 120/80 mmHg, which can put you at risk for other health problems, including heart disease, heart attack and stroke. An at risk or elevated blood pressure, also known as prehypertension, is a systolic pressure ranging from 120 to 129 mmHg and a diastolic pressure below 80

mmHg. Elevated blood pressure tends to get worse over time unless steps are taken to control blood pressure. Stage 1 hypertension is a systolic pressure ranging from 130 to 139 mmHg or a diastolic pressure ranging from 80 to 89 mmHg. More severe hypertension, stage 2, is a systolic pressure of 140 mmHg or higher or a diastolic pressure of 90 mmHg or higher.

What is high cholesterol? Blood cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made by your liver – it is essential for good health. Dietary cholesterol is found in animal foods, including meat, seafood, poultry, eggs and dairy products. According to the CDC, your body makes all the blood cholesterol it needs, which is why experts recommend people eat as little dietary cholesterol as possible.

Stay healthy. Changing your lifestyle can go a long way toward controlling high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Talk to your primary care physician about changes and treatment options. If you are prescribed medication, take it faithfully while continuing your lifestyle changes – they can help keep your medication dose low. Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some medical offices are offering virtual, or telemedicine visits.

Eat healthy. Eat a heart-healthy diet with less salt by reducing how much saturated and trans-fat you eat, including those found in red meat and dairy products made with whole milk. Limit fried foods and eat lots of fruits, veggies, whole grains, fish and poultry.

Get active. Just 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week is enough to lower both cholesterol and high blood pressure. Even losing a few pounds can help improve high cholesterol numbers.

Quit smoking and limit alcohol. The benefits of quitting are quick—within 20 minutes, your blood pressure and heart rate recover from the cigarette-induced spike, and within a year, your risk of heart disease is half that of a smoker. Avoid drinking too much alcohol. Men should have no more than two drinks per day, and women should have no more than one.

About GlobalHealth

GlobalHealth is changing health insurance in Oklahoma by providing genuine care and optimal health for the members it serves. As an industry leader, GlobalHealth is an Oklahoma-based health insurance provider covering individuals in all 77 Oklahoma counties. Working proactively with its members, GlobalHealth engages a personalized management plan to address their specific needs and ensure the best possible health outcomes. GlobalHealth utilizes cutting-edge, predictive data technology as a foundation to deliver improved healthcare as part of its commitment to making health insurance more affordable. Its membership includes individuals who are eligible for Medicare, state, education and municipal employees and federal employees. To learn more, visit www.GlobalHealth.com.

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