

EP. 72 New Blood Pressure Guidelines

Just recently the guidelines for evaluating and treating blood pressure have been updated for the first time in more than a decade. These new recommendations lower the threshold for hypertension and eliminate the prehypertension category.

Because we did IV sedation in our practice, every patient was screened for high blood pressure as part of our Standard of Care. We wanted to have a baseline so that if the patient's blood pressure was high we had a history to compare it to. This not only is a great diagnostic tool for you, the provider, and the patient, but as we've mentioned in previous podcasts, it also creates value for the dental appointment.

The new guidelines are based on a systematic review of dozens of studies and other research findings. (Source: DrBicuspid 2017)

New Guidelines:

- Normal BP is considered to be less than 120 systolic and less than 80 diastolic.
- Elevated- systolic between 120-129 and diastolic less than 80.
- Hypertension Stage 1- systolic between 130-139 or diastolic between 80-89.
- Hypertension Stage 2- systolic 140+ or diastolic 90+
- Hypertension Crisis- Systolic 180+ and/or diastolic 120+

Under the new guidelines, almost half the U.S. population qualifies as having high blood pressure, compared with 1 out of 3 people under the older guidelines. Younger adults are more likely to be affected by the changes than older adults, with hypertension diagnoses expected to triple for men younger than 45 and double for women younger than 45.

Research from the American Heart Association shows new evidence linking periodontal disease to hypertension and heart disease, so taking blood pressure should be a given for dental care providers.

What does that mean for us?

- Get with your team and discuss your plan of action regarding taking blood pressure in your practice. Add this to your Standard of Care.
- What will you do if you determine a patient's blood pressure is too high for treatment today? Prepare for this in advance so you are not caught by surprise.
- For more accuracy, the new guidelines emphasize getting accurate blood pressure readings by taking the average of two or three readings on at least two different occasions.

Meet with your team and review the updated guidelines and decide if any changes need to be made to your Standard of Care.