

# Heart TALK

Heart-healthy and Stroke-free Living with Dr. Amy L. Doneen, DNP, ARNP

Vol 58 March 2018



*Thoughts from  
Dr. Amy*

## An Easy Four-Step Plan to Optimize ORAL HEALTH & PREVENT HEART ATTACKS



Following a simple four-step plan to protect your oral health can lower your risk for heart attacks, stroke, diabetes, colds, flu, arthritis and even some forms of cancer. In fact, a recent study of more than 5,600 older adults found that one of the simplest –and most effective – keys to a long life is combining regular dental checkups with excellent self-care, including daily brushing and flossing.

Here's why optimal oral health can add years to your life. A landmark BaleDoneen study published in Postgraduate Medical Journal (PMJ) is the first to identify oral bacteria from periodontal (gum) disease as a contributing cause of cardiovascular disease (CVD), the leading killer of Americans. To find out how to combat these bacterial villains — and achieve a perfect 10 in dental wellness – we talked to Cris Duval, the BaleDoneen Method's new Director, Oral Wellness Liaison, who offers these four easy-to-implement steps to protect your oral and arterial health.

**Step 1. Partner with your dental provider and set goals to take your oral health to the next level of excellence.** With study after study linking poor oral health to [increased risk for life-threatening conditions](#), says Duval, patients are taking an increasingly active role in their health and dental care. "Patients are looking for clinicians who share more knowledge, show them how to prevent problems, and prepare for a healthier tomorrow," she says.

To find a dental provider in your area who is trained in the latest science of heart attack and stroke prevention and evidence-based strategies to optimize and protect oral-systemic health, consult the BaleDoneen Method [Medical-Dental Provider Map](#), advises Duval. Make the most of your next dental visit by preparing a list of your oral health goals, concerns and questions, such as these:

- How do you rank my oral health on a scale of 1 to 10?
- What are my risk factors?
- What needs to happen for the two of us to get my oral health to a 10?
- Are you willing to partner/coach me on how to achieve my oral health goals?
- How do you rank my overall health on a scale of 1 to 10 and are there any red flags in my medical history that stand out?
- What needs to happen for the two of us to get my overall health to a 10?

Also ask to be screened for gum disease, Duval says.

**Step 2. Ask your dental provider to test you for high-risk oral bacteria.** The PMJ study discussed above could transform how dental providers diagnose and manage periodontal disease (PD), a chronic oral infection that affects the majority of U.S. adults age 30 and older. If untreated, bacteria from PD often enter the bloodstream and inflame arterial plaque, leading to blood clots that can trigger heart attacks and strokes.

Research suggests that the harmful cardiovascular effects of gum disease are due to a few high-risk oral bacteria discussed in the study: Aggregatibacter actinomycetemcomitans, Porphyromonas gingivalis, Tannerella forsythia, Treponema denticola or Fusobacterium nucleatum. To find out which patients harbor these dangerous bacteria, The BaleDoneen Method recommends using available diagnostic tests that measure oral pathogens through DNA analysis, including OralDNA, OraVital and Hain Diagnostics.

Because people without gum disease can also harbor these dangerous bacteria, Duval recommends this painless oral testing for all dental patients: "I'll even test children if one of their parents has a high load of oral pathogens, since the bacteria can spread easily between family members through kissing or sharing food. Dogs are another potential source of bacterial infection, so avoid letting your pet lick you or your kids on the face. Always wash your hands after handling objects your dog has licked or chewed, such as his toys or food bowl."

**Step 3. Disinfect your entire mouth daily.** In the study of older adults, those who brushed and flossed daily outlived people with neither habit. However, there are a few additional self-care habits that can truly optimize your oral health, notes Duval, who recommends the following ways to safeguard your smile and overall wellness:

- To reduce harmful bacteria in your mouth, don't just brush your

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**



**Heart Attack & Stroke Prevention Center**

507 S. Washington, Suite 170  
Spokane, Washington 99204

**(509) 747-8000**

[www.TheHASPC.com](http://www.TheHASPC.com)



# THE NEW BLOOD PRESSURE GUIDELINES: 4 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Nearly half of U.S. adults (46%) are now considered to have high blood pressure under new guidelines from the American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology. The guidelines set a lower threshold for a disorder often called “the silent killer” because hypertension typically causes few or no symptoms as it wreaks slow mayhem on your blood vessels and vital organs, such as your heart, brain and kidneys. If untreated, high blood pressure is the leading risk factor for stroke and a major contributor to heart disease.

Under the old guidelines, only one in three Americans were deemed to have high blood pressure, which was defined as a reading of 140/90 mmHg (millimeters of mercury) or higher. The new guidelines define hypertension as 130/80 mmHg or higher, putting an additional 30 million Americans in the danger zone. The good news, however, is that high blood pressure is both preventable and highly treatable. Here are four things you need to know about the new guidelines, plus BaleDoneen recommendations on how to protect and optimize your arterial health.

## 1. Know the new numbers and discuss your blood pressure with your medical provider.

The new guidelines eliminate the category of prehypertension (previously defined as systolic pressure between 120 and 139 or diastolic pressure between 80 and 89). Until recently, the 67 million Americans with blood pressure in this range were often told that their pressure was “a little high, but nothing to worry about.” Actually, studies show that having prehypertension doubles the risk for cardiovascular events, such as heart attacks and strokes. Recognizing that serious or fatal complications of high blood pressure can occur at lower numbers, and to encourage earlier treatment, the guidelines create the following new blood pressure categories:

**Normal:** Less than 120/80 mmHg.

**Elevated:** Systolic blood pressure (the top number) between 120-129 and diastolic pressure (the bottom number) less than 80.

**Stage 1 hypertension:** Systolic between 130-139 or diastolic between 80-89.

**Stage 2 hypertension:** Systolic at least 140 or diastolic at least 90 mmHg.

**BaleDoneen takeaway:** Although people often assume that hypertension is mainly a problem for middle-aged or older adults, it can strike at any age. Under the new guidelines, rates of hypertension are expected to triple among men under age 45 and double for women under 45. That’s why it’s crucial for even young people to get their blood pressure checked regularly. If even one of your numbers is abnormal, talk to your medical provider about ways to reduce it. Treatments include lifestyle changes and, if necessary, medication.

## 2. Lowering systolic blood pressure from 140 to 120 saves lives!

Until recently, a commonly recommended treatment target for systolic blood pressure (SBP) was 140. The landmark SPRINT clinical trial compared outcomes in people treated to this goal (with an average of two medications) to those who received a more intensive therapy to lower SBP to 120. The researchers found that the more intensive therapy (using an average of three medications) lowered rates of cardiovascular (CV) events, such as heart attacks, strokes and heart failure, by nearly one-third. The study included about 9,300 people ages 50 and older of diverse ethnicities with high blood pressure and at least one other risk factor for heart disease.

**BaleDoneen takeaway:** The SPRINT findings are powerful! Lowering the SBP target from 140 to 120 saved lives, because there were 25% fewer deaths from CV and other causes. That’s an extremely impressive — and potentially lifesaving — result from taking one additional medication.

## 3. Your morning blood pressure may be the best predictor of heart attack and stroke risk.

A recent study of nearly 22,000 people with hypertension found that morning measurements (when blood pressure tends to be the highest) were more accurate for predicting heart attack and stroke risk than readings taken at home in the evening or those taken by clinicians in medical settings. The study found a significantly higher rate of CV events in people whose morning SBP was 145 or higher, versus those with a reading below 125.

**BaleDoneen takeaway:** The new guidelines encourage home blood pressure monitoring as an important way for people with hypertension to track their health. However, it’s essential to know the right technique: When using a wrist blood-pressure cuff, the reading will be inaccurate unless the device is positioned at heart level. A good way to tell if the device is correctly positioned is to hold the arm with the BP cuff across your chest as you would if the national anthem were playing.

## 4. Elevated systolic blood pressure (SBP) is more dangerous than smoking or obesity!

A 2017 study that examined data from 8.69 million people from 154 countries found that SBP of 110 or higher is one of the leading risks for health problems, including coronary artery disease (plaque buildup in the vessels that feed the heart), stroke and chronic kidney disease. The researchers also reported that 30% of the disease burden fell on those with SBP of 110 to 135.

**BaleDoneen takeaway:** While SBP of 110 to 119 is not cause for concern, you may want to discuss natural ways to reduce blood pressure with your medical provider. These include mindful meditation to reduce stress (an important contributor to elevated blood pressure), beet juice (which has been shown to reduce SPB 4 to 5 points within hours of drinking it), eating foods that are rich in magnesium (which helps regulate blood pressure), such as dark green leafy vegetables, unrefined grains, and legumes, and getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night (skipping on slumber is linked to increased risk for hypertension).







# Rainbow Fruit Kebabs with Lemon-Lime Dip

• *March Recipe*

Eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables every day is one of the easiest and most delicious ways to get a full spectrum of the nutrients you need for vibrant heart and systemic health. In fact, “eating the rainbow” of fresh produce has been linked to lower risk for heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and several forms of cancer! Eating certain colorful fruits and veggies may also be linked to *better memory and longer life, studies suggest.*

Packed with vitamins and disease-fighting antioxidants, these fruit skewers are easy to prepare and sure to delight your entire family. Your kids will love helping to make them too!

## INGREDIENTS

- 12 ounces of low-fat, sugar-free lemon yogurt
- 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
- 2 teaspoons lime zest
- 6 raspberries
- 6 strawberries, hulled
- 6 tangerine segments
- 6 peeled mango chunks
- 6 peeled pineapple chunks
- 6 peeled kiwi slices, cut into half moons
- 6 green grapes
- 6 red or purple seedless grapes
- 12 blueberries
- 6 wooden skewers

In a medium bowl, blend yogurt, lime juice and lime zest. Cover and refrigerate until needed. Thread the following fruits on each skewer to create a fruit rainbow: one raspberry, one strawberry, one tangerine segment, one mango chunk, one pineapple chunk, one kiwi slice, one green grape, one red or purple grape and two blueberries. Serve with lemon-lime dipping sauce and enjoy!

## SERVES SIX

Adapted from [Mayoclinic.org](http://Mayoclinic.org) and [bbcgoodfood.com](http://bbcgoodfood.com).



Follow the HASPC on **Twitter** and **Facebook** for the latest news on heart health and wellness.

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- teeth and gums. Also brush your cheeks, the roof of your mouth and the vestibule (the area between the teeth, lips and cheeks.)
- Use a tongue scraper — not a toothbrush — to clean your tongue.
  - After flossing, also use dental picks (such as G.U.M. Soft-Picks) to efficiently remove debris between teeth that floss doesn't reach.
  - Fight bacterial buildup by using a high pH (alkaline) toothpaste, such as CariFree or CloCYS. These companies also have high pH mouthwashes.
  - Choose dental products that contain xylitol, a compound with an antimicrobial effect. Several studies show that xylitol

products, such as toothpaste, chewing gum and lozenges, help prevent cavities and may reduce risk for gum disease.

- Go to bed with a clean mouth. Since your mouth makes less saliva when you are sleeping to wash your teeth and gums, it's particularly important to disinfect your mouth thoroughly at bedtime.
- Avoid mouthwashes that contain sugar or alcohol.

**Step 4. Get a dental cleaning every 3 months, or as advised by your dental provider.** Doing so could actually save your life! In the study of older adults, those who hadn't seen a dentist in the previous year had a 50% higher death rate than who went multiple times a year.

“One of our goals is to keep all of our patients

in what I call the ‘safety zone,’ as opposed to the danger zone where gum disease and high-risk bacteria create a perfect storm of inflammatory responses that leave people susceptible to heart attacks and strokes,” says Duval.

To stay in the safety zone, it's crucial to get dental checkups and any necessary treatments on the schedule advised by your dental provider. If you have gum disease, treatments include nonsurgical periodontal therapy, a daily program of self-care to follow at home, prescription mouthwashes, dental trays with antibacterial gel (PerioProtect), and in some cases, a short course of antibiotics. Regardless of which treatment is prescribed, the BaleDoneen Method recommends repeating the DNA testing to make sure the treatment was successful.