

## HEALTH

# Tips for Managing High Blood Pressure during Cold and Flu Season

NewsUSA

(NU) - Although COVID-19 continues to dominate health news, don't discount the impact of seasonal colds and flu on health, especially for individuals with high blood pressure.

According to the American Heart Association, heart attacks and strokes increase during the winter months along with the arrival of colds and flu, so it is important for anyone with high blood pressure to treat cold and flu symptoms safely and to take steps to avoid getting sick.

The American Heart Association offers several safety tips for managing high blood pressure, especially for those taking blood pressure medications:

- Check labels. Many over-the-counter decongestant medications, as well as some pain relievers, contain ingredients that are known to raise blood pressure and may make your prescription medication less effective. If you are taking blood pressure medication or have a history of a heart attack or stroke, ask your doctor or pharmacist which options are safe for you before you choose an over-the-counter medication for cold or flu relief. If you must use a decongestant, use it for the shortest time possible.

- Know triggers. Beware of other factors that can raise blood pressure and that may be part of your activities during the long, cold winter, notably alcohol consumption, salt consumption, and the use of hot tubs and saunas.

- Be proactive. Several steps to



Photo Credit: The American Heart Association

help reduce your risk of colds and flu, includes staying active, staying hydrated, wearing a mask, washing hands frequently, social distancing, avoiding crowds, using hand sanitizer, and getting a flu shot. In addition, keeping track of your blood pressure can help you identify problems early and reduce your risk of getting sick.

"If you are diagnosed with high blood pressure, you should monitor your blood pressure regularly. Your blood pressure should be below 130/80. If your numbers are higher, talk to your doctor about a plan to lower it," says Dr. Willie Lawrence, chief of cardiologist, Research Medical Center and American Heart Association expert volunteer.

The American Heart Association's high blood pressure web content area is made possible by generous support from Bayer Healthcare LLC, makers of Coricidin HBP. Visit [heart.org/hbp](http://heart.org/hbp) for more information about how to manage blood pressure and stay healthy during cold and flu season.