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National Blood Pressure Awareness Week, 1984

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

High blood pressure is a disease that affects as many as 60 million Americans and is a major factor in the 1.25 million heart attacks and half-million strokes every year in the United States. Heart attacks annually kill 500,000 Americans, and the economic cost to the Nation in direct medical costs, lost work days and lost production will soar into the tens of billions of dollars.

Unfortunate as these statistics are, there are many encouraging signs that we are making progress in controlling this disease. Death rates from heart attacks and stroke have been declining dramatically for more than a decade. From 1972 to 1982, for example, the death rate for heart attack dropped by 27 percent, and for stroke by 42 percent.

Often called the silent killer because it usually exhibits no symptoms, high blood pressure is an insidious condition that may lead to heart attack, stroke or kidney damage. Along with cigarette smoking and elevated blood cholesterol, it is one of three major risk factors for cardiovascular diseases.

High blood pressure can be detected quickly and painlessly by use of an inflatable arm cuff and stethoscope. All Americans should take advantage of the high blood pressure screening activities in their communities, their work places and their public health facilities. Once detected, high blood pressure usually can be controlled very effectively. Weight loss, salt restrictions and exercise may be prescribed as possible remedies. When these do not work, a physician can select an appropriate treatment program from a wide range of drug therapies.

At least one of the factors responsible for the decline in death rates from heart attacks and strokes is enhanced awareness among the public and the medical profession of the dangers of high blood pressure and the steps that people can take to bring it under control. This growing awareness has been brought about largely through the efforts of the National High Blood Pressure Education Program, a coordinated program involving the Federal government, community volunteer organizations, medical associations, industry and labor, state and local public health agencies and many other groups. We must intensify our efforts to promote public understanding of the dangers of this prevalent condition and public knowledge that effective treatment methods are available.

To stimulate public awareness of the role high blood pressure plays in bringing about heart attacks and strokes and to encourage all Americans to check their blood pressure and obtain treatment if it is elevated, the Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 260, has designated the week beginning November 11, 1984, as "National Blood Pressure Awareness Week" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning November 11, 1984, as National Blood Pressure Awareness Week. I invite all interested government agencies and officials and the American people to observe this occasion with appropriate observances.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and ninth.

Ronald Reagan