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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Health & Wellness Observes World Hypertension Day

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The Ministry of Health & Wellness is observing World Hypertension Day today under the theme “Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer.”

This day is observed annually to raise awareness and promote hypertension prevention, detection and control. The key risk factors for hypertension, commonly known as high blood pressure, include consuming a diet high in sodium, being overweight, and limited physical activity. Hypertension is also the main risk factor leading to the development of heart disease. In 2020, Belize reported a 28% prevalence of hypertension with 308 deaths resulting from heart disease.

This year, the Ministry of Health & Wellness through the Nutrition Unit in collaboration with the Public Health Unit has embarked on a Salt Reduction/ Healthy Eating Campaign. The objective of the campaign is to educate cooks and vendors on the dangers of unhealthy cooking practices and to promote healthy cooking options. Through this campaign, the ministry also aims to raise awareness of the link between disease and unhealthy meal preparations and to encourage healthier cooking tips for the general population.

It is advised to reduce the daily intake of sodium or salt that can be found in processed foods, such as bacon, chopped ham, salami, cheese, and instant noodles, among others. Salt is also added to food during cooking and found in condiments such as soy, steak, and Worcestershire sauces. The World Health Organization recommends that adults consume less than five grams (just under a teaspoon) of salt per day.

Other nutrition and health tips include:

- Use herbal-based seasonings such as garlic, onions, cilantro, spices, citrus juice, or salt-free seasonings.
- Use less salt when cooking and avoid bottled mixed seasonings options.
- Avoid processed foods and canned foods. If canned foods must be used, drain the liquid and rinse before consuming.
- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables and avoid canned options.
- Maintain physical activity and healthy eating. These can have positive effects in reducing blood pressure.

Ends

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