

## Managing hypertension prevents life-threatening complications

Persons with high blood pressure are four times more likely to die from stroke, and three times more likely to die from heart disease. Heart disease and stroke are the second- and fourth-leading causes of death in Delaware

One-third of Americans with high blood pressure (hypertension) are unaware they have the condition. An ideal blood pressure is less than 120/80 but 140/90 is considered the earliest stage of hypertension, often called the silent killer. However, hypertension can be managed and prevented.

Supported by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), DPH and Quality Insights (QI) offer physician practices hypertension management tools. To date, 85 practices use QI's electronic educational modules that include patient reminders, apps, podcasts, and videos; weekly news bulletins, and hands-on technical assistance.



Seven physician offices loan blood pressure monitors so hypertensive patients can call in their readings from home. Patients learn to lower their blood pressure with prescribed medicine; by losing excess weight; and by being physically active, eating healthy meals, and not smoking.

"In my work with underserved communities, I frequently saw the serious impact that uncontrolled blood pressure has on patients' overall health," said Department of Health and Social Services Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker. "I'm very pleased that through our partnership with Quality Insights, we are able to offer these important tools to physicians to improve health and longevity."

Providers interested in learning more about the QI program should contact Ashley Biscardi at [Abiscard@qualityinsights.org](mailto:Abiscard@qualityinsights.org). To register for DPH's free classes to control high blood pressure, call the Bureau of Chronic Diseases at 302-744-1020.



East Millsboro Elementary School student Hajra Sultan, at left, smiles during her screening with Registered Dental Hygienist Ashley Hudson, center, and East Millsboro Nurse Erica Jester. Submitted photo.

## DPH dental program launches Delaware Smile Check in schools

The Division of Public Health's (DPH) newest school-based oral health outreach program is Delaware Smile Check (DSC). The grant-funded program provides under-served children with screenings, coordinates emergency dental treatment, and finds them dental homes.

To date, a DPH hygienist has screened 1,018 students at seven schools and applied preventive fluoride varnish to strengthen teeth against decay. Students take home oral health report cards. DSC suspected cavities in 206 students and assisted 217 in finding dentists to treat them immediately. So far, 46 dentists accept insured and uninsured students referred by DSC to ensure they receive treatment and establish a dental home.

"[DSC] has opened my eyes to the importance and genuine need of access to care, dental education, and dental disease prevention among children," said Ashley Hudson, RDH, BSDH, a participating Sussex County dental hygienist.

Dental Health Products, Inc. (DHPI) donated fluoride varnish, toothbrushes, and toothpaste.

"...DHPI is a partner for a common cause to improve oral health care for all ages," said LaDeana DeClark, special markets representative with DHPI.

Schools interested in participating in this program should contact Gena Riley in DPH's Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Health Services at [Gena.Riley@state.de.us](mailto:Gena.Riley@state.de.us) or 302-744-4554.