

MYTHS ABOUT HYPERTENSION

In Myth: “I don’t have high blood pressure; I feel perfectly fine”.

Truth: Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, is “the silent killer” because a majority of patients with elevated blood pressure feel just fine. While it is not 100% clear why, imagine what happens to your fingertips if the blood flow to them is cut off (i.e. in cold weather); you start to lose sensation. Pain is harder to register in your hands at that point.

Now imagine the blood vessels in someone with a really high blood pressure (BP)—the arteries become hardened and stiff. Nearby nerves in the eyes, brain, heart, etc. may not be registering pain or distress the same. Hence, the absence of headaches, blurry vision, and dizziness (for example) does not mean automatically that everything is OK. In fact, those who feel the worst, and check their blood pressures as a result, may actually be the lucky ones—and they are in the minority.

Myth: “No one in my family history had high blood pressure, so I should be fine”.

Truth: This is wrong for 2 reasons. First, hypertension may develop for a host of non-genetic reasons (age, stress, other medical illness, weight, smoking/drinking/drugs, high salt diet, medications, etc.). Second, see Myth #1. Imagine having a silent disease 20, 50, or 100 years ago. With tougher economic times, less access to medical care, and shorter life spans in the past for many of our relatives, who exactly knows who had hypertension and who did not. If you don’t have all the facts, it may be safer to assume that there may be a family history worth considering, just to be safe and proactive.

DEFENSIVE FLYING

BY MIKE BLISS

When we first learned to drive, we were taught the importance of defensive driving. We were told to expect the unexpected. We learned how to develop the habit of anticipating situations before they happened and to be prepared to take action as we identified hazards in our path.

These same skills are equally important when it comes to flying. The pilot who has the mindset of anticipating possible hazards and is mentally prepared to deal with them, should they actually arise, is much more likely to have a safe outcome than one not in the habit of flying defensively.

Defensive flying is being prepared for the other guy to do something unexpected such as a runway incursion, not following right-of-way rules, taxiing onto the runway for takeoff while you are on short final, failing to comply with Land and Hold Short instructions, anticipating the possibility of encountering another aircraft when crossing a VOR, and any number of other possibilities.

Defensive flying also means being prepared to deal with unexpected situations not involving other aircraft. One that comes to mind for anyone who has been in that situation is dealing with an engine failure on takeoff. Flying defensively means anticipating that possibility before each takeoff and being mentally prepared to deal with it should it occur. Another such situation might be having to execute a missed approach when the latest weather report did not prepare you for that possibility.

Developing the habit of defensive flying will add to your sense of confidence and make you a safer pilot.

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