



gerontology

A. Jolayne Farrell

Blood pressure questions? Here are some answers

Dear Jo: When I had my blood pressure taken on my last physical exam, it was 140 over 86. Exactly what do these two figures mean?

If you think of the heart as a pump that pushes the blood through the arteries, then the first number recorded is when the pump contracts and is in the phase called systole. So your systolic pressure is 140. The second number represents the reading taken during the relaxation phase of the heart. This is the phase called diastole, when the pressure from the heart is at its lowest. Your diastolic pressure, then, is 86.

The lower number, your diastolic pressure, is the more important figure, as it tells your doctor your basic blood pressure without the added push of the heart's contraction.

Dear Jo: I have just been told by my doctor that I have high blood pressure. My father had high blood pressure, and so does my brother. I would like to know if this condition is inherited, and if it is more common in men than women. Also, since I didn't have high blood pressure before, does it increase as we age?

I'm sure that you are aware of the fact that if high blood pressure (hypertension) is not controlled, serious complications such as heart disease, stroke and kidney failure can result.

Hypertension does seem to run in families. Therefore, it is advisable for those who have a family history of this condition to be checked regularly. Specialist in the field of hypertension have varying opinions on the subject as to whether or not it is more common in men than women. There is no definite answer to this at the present time.

Blood pressure levels often, but not always, increase as we age. A higher systolic reading is one of the most common findings. It is thought to be directly related to the loss of elasticity of the blood vessels. The diastolic pressure remains relatively normal in the healthy aging adult.

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Wayne County drops SEMCOG

Wayne County has requested status as an "inactive" member of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) because of its inability to pay \$150,000 in annual dues for the second straight year.

During 1980, the county kept its votes on the regional planning agency's decision-making bodies, even though it had not paid SEMCOG dues. That brought a protest from the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, which threatened not to pay dues for 1981 if Wayne County were allowed continued participation without paying.

A SPECIAL SEMCOG committee is expected to meet in January to consider Wayne County's status with the seven-county planning group.

Wayne County Board Chairman Samuel Turner, D-Detroit, has asked that the county be placed on an inactive status with respect to the privileges of membership until we are in a

position to meet the financial commitment of dues-paying members. The county did not include 1981 SEMCOG dues in its current budget, which took effect Dec. 1.

Between 1972 and 1979, the county paid SEMCOG dues totaling \$1,171,003, while communities within the county paid \$538,352.

In 1979, dues paid by all member counties and communities in the seven-county region totaled \$503,000.

BECAUSE OF growing annual budget deficits, Wayne County has stopped contributing to other organizations, including the Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau (\$54,000), the Southeast Michigan Travel and Tourists Association (\$5,000), the Comprehensive Health Planning Council of Southeast Michigan (\$25,420) and the Wayne County Child Care Coordinating Council (\$14,400).

Study seeking heart patients

The University of Minnesota is seeking volunteers to participate in a national study.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute study is being conducted at the University of Minnesota, the University of Arkansas, the University of Southern California and Lankenau Hospital in Philadelphia.

The research team is conducting the study in hope of determining the relationship of lowering cholesterol to heart disease.

The study seeks people who have had only one heart attack in the past five years, between 28 and 64 years old, and free of diabetes, stroke and heart surgery.

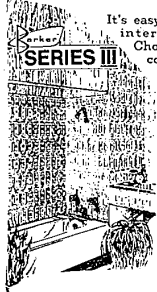
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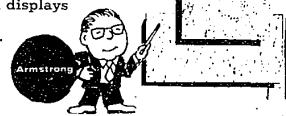
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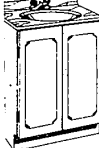
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