Dr. Fowler on Hypertension

When I spoke with a patient regarding hypertension during an office visit, I realized very quickly that there was often a difference in our two minds about the meaning of that word. Hypertension is a medical word meaning high blood pressure. It is a very important distinction. This month is Stroke and Hypertension Awareness Month. Having hypertension top of mind is very important.

I think at least these three questions should come to your mind as you think about hypertension.

- Why should I care?
- What can I do about hypertension?
- What difference will it make if I follow some recommendations?

Let’s look at them one at a time.

**Why should I care?** Hypertension is a very common disease. One third of adults in the U.S. have hypertension. That is about 75 million of us. The older we become the higher the chances. The sad part is that only about ½ of those that have hypertension are adequately treated and controlled. Why does that matter? Uncontrolled hypertension is one of the 5 most important risks for having a heart attack or a stroke. We do not know we have hypertension by how we feel. If we do not get our blood pressure checked regularly, there is no way to have the opportunity to reduce the risk for those diseases. Controlling hypertension has contributed to the nearly 50% reduction in number of heart attacks and strokes that have occurred in the U.S. since 1975. In other words, we know treatment and control WORK! If half of the people with hypertension are not adequately controlled, we can even further reduce the incidence of heart attack and stroke for ourselves and our neighbors through measurement and control.

**What can I do about hypertension?** #1 is knowing your number! What is your blood pressure reading? Having a Primary Care Doctor who follows your blood pressure regularly, identifies when it is out of the recommended range, and treats it to the controlled range is the most important thing you can do. Hypertension should not be treated in an emergency room or urgent care. Your personal physician is who should be treating you. It should be a very unusual event that you should go to the emergency room for your blood pressure. If you are concerned about your blood pressure, talk to your doctor!

*(cont’d on Page 7, Dr. Fowler)*
May is National Stroke Awareness Month

FIVE Things you should know.

1. Stroke Risk increases with age, but young adults, children, and even unborn babies can suffer strokes. If one of your parents had an ischemic stroke before age 65, you are at 3X THE RISK of suffering one yourself.
2. HIGH blood pressure is ENEMY #1. Three out of four people who suffer first strokes have high blood pressure.
3. STROKE targets by COLOR. Blacks have nearly 2x the risk for a first-ever stroke as whites.
4. STROKE is largely TREATABLE. Clot-busting drugs and medical devices have made stroke largely treatable, but every second counts. The faster you are treated, the more likely you are to recover without permanent disability.
5. FRIENDS usually SAVE friends from STROKE. Learn to recognize the warning signs of stroke.

Know the signs. Act fast.

Stroke won’t wait. Neither should you.

Life’s Simple 7 — Steps to Better Health

The American Heart Association has developed Life’s Simple 7 – these measures have one unique thing in common: any person, of any age, can make these changes. The steps are not expensive or difficult to take, and even modest improvements to your health will make a big difference. Start with one or two. This simple seven-step list has been developed to deliver on the hope we all have - to live a longer, more productive, healthier life.

For more information, go to www.heart.org/seniorhealth.
What is Stroke?

Stroke is a disease that affects the arteries leading to and within the brain. It is the No. 5 cause of death and a leading cause of disability in the United States.

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain either bursts, ruptures or is blocked by a clot. As a result, the brain cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs and pieces of the brain die.

Stroke Risk Factors

Approximately 80 percent of strokes can be prevented. Though some stroke risk factors are uncontrollable, such as age and race, other risk factors are in your control and making small lifestyle changes can reduce your stroke risk. For example, hypertension, which is the leading risk factor, can be controlled by eating a healthy diet, regularly physical activity, not smoking, and by taking prescribed medications. The American Heart Association identifies seven factors to control for ideal health. Life’s Simple 7: be active, control cholesterol, eat a healthy diet, manage blood pressure, maintain a healthy weight, control blood sugar and don’t smoke.

Types of Stroke

An Ischemic Stroke occurs when a clot or mass, often a fatty plaque deposit, clogs a blood vessel cutting off the blood flow to brain cells.

Ischemic strokes account for 87 percent of all stroke cases.

A Hemorrhagic Stroke results from a weakened vessel that ruptures and bleeds into the surrounding brain tissue.

The blood accumulates and forms a bruise within the brain tissue, compressing brain cells and causing them to die.

A TIA or Transient Ischemic Attack produces stroke-like symptoms. A TIA is caused by a clot; but unlike a stroke, the blockage is temporary and usually causes no permanent damage to the brain. TIs are often called “mini-strokes”.

Approximately 15 percent of all strokes occur after a TIA. A TIA is a medical emergency!

To learn more about stroke, visit StrokeAssociation.org.
STROKES AND YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Keeping a brain healthy can help reduce your risk for STROKE, a leading cause of death and no 1 preventable cause of disability.

BY THE NUMBERS

- **4.03** Every 4.03 seconds someone has a stroke.
- **55,000** About 55,000 more women than men have a stroke each year.
- **5** Cause of Death in USA

STROKE AND BRAIN HEALTH RISK

- Stroke and early mental decline in mid life have been linked to unhealthy lifestyles.
- 3 out of 5 Americans will develop a brain disease in their lifetime.
- 1 in 4 strokes are in people who have had a previous stroke.

80% OF ALL STROKES CAN BE PREVENTED

Maintain a healthy body to have a sharp mind and healthy brain while reducing your risk for stroke and heart disease.

GET ENOUGH SLEEP.
For adults 7-8 hours per day, more for teenagers and children.

BE SOCIALLY ACTIVE.
Observational studies have shown that people with poor social support or networks are at higher risk for stroke and heart disease.

EAT HEALTHY.
Recommended daily limit of 1500mg sodium.

EXERCISE.
30 minutes daily activity.

GET REGULAR CHECKUPS.
Schedule regular visits with your doctor and talk to your doctor about your risks and ways to reduce them.

DON’T SMOKE — IF YOU SMOKE, STOP.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional
2. Call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit StrokeAssociation.org

Sources:
- https://www.michaeljfox.org/foundation/publication-detail.html?id=484&category=7
- AMA/MSA: Internet Discovery Research, 2011
May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month

From: https://healthfinder.gov

National High Blood Pressure Education Month marks the “kickoff” of high blood pressure prevention and control activities for the year. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) launched the first month campaign in May 1974.

We encourage you to take ACTION during the month of May to know your blood pressure and control it. A great place to start is to CHECK your blood pressure as soon as possible. Ask a doctor or nurse to check your blood pressure at your next visit.

You can do this at your primary care doctor’s office, but many shopping malls, pharmacies and grocery stores also have blood pressure machines you can use. You can also buy a home blood pressure monitor at a drug store.

Blood pressure is measured with two numbers. The first number is the pressure in your arteries when you heart beats. The second number is the pressure in your arteries between each beat when your heart relaxes.

Compare your blood pressure to these numbers:

- Normal blood pressure is lower than 120/80 (said “120 over 80”).
- High blood pressure is 140/90 or higher.
- Blood pressure that’s between normal and high (for example, 130/85) is called prehypertension, or high normal blood pressure.

If the test shows that your blood pressure is high, TALK to your doctor. You may need medicine to control your blood pressure.

TAKE THESE STEPS to lower your blood pressure

- Check your blood pressure regularly.
- Eat healthy foods that are low in saturated fat and sodium (salt).
- Watch your weight by eating healthy and getting active.
- Get active. Aim for 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity like walking fast, dancing, riding a bike, swimming, or aerobics.
- Drink in moderation. If you choose to drink alcohol, limit your drinking to no more than 1 drink a day for women and no more than 2 drinks a day for men.
- Manage your stress. Reducing stress can help prevent and control high blood pressure. Deep breathing and medication are good ways to relax and manage stress.
- Quit smoking. Smoking damages your heart and blood vessels. Quit smoking to help lower your risk of high blood pressure and heart disease.
- Remember to take medicines as prescribed (ordered) by your doctor.

Small changes can add up. For example, losing just 10 pounds can help lower your blood pressure.
Your lifestyle choices can also have major impact on your blood pressure. This is unlikely to be new information, but just as when I treat my patients with hypertension, I want you to know what you can do that can make as much or more difference as any medication.

1) Stop smoking cigarettes, cigars or any other tobacco use. These “drugs” immediately raise your blood pressure.

2) Limit alcohol consumption. We are unable to predict the person that is highly sensitive to alcohol, and it increases the blood pressure. Limit your alcohol to no more than 2 beers, 3 ounces of liquor, or 10 ounces of wine a day for men, and ½ of that for women.

3) Work toward and ideal body weight or BMI of 25 or less. Your doctor can guide you on this. There is a direct relationship between weight and blood pressure. In other words, the higher the weight, the higher the blood pressure and vice versa.

4) Get regular aerobic exercise. By walking briskly 150 minutes a week you can contribute to lowering your blood pressure.

5) STOP using a saltshaker. Sodium excess is a major issue. We get more than enough without trying.

Dr. Fowler, Continued from Page 1

What difference will it make if I follow these recommendations? All of us want to live optimally. By that, I mean interact with our family and friends freely without disease interference, perform our jobs without limitations due to heart attack or stroke, and maintain our independence as we age, just to name a few things. We have reduced the incidence of cardiovascular disease by nearly 50% in the last 40 years in the U.S., and it is estimated that controlled hypertension, by itself, has been responsible for 20% of that reduction.

Ask yourself, what are the barriers that keep you from controlling your blood pressure? Your doctor is ready to help you overcome those barriers. Partner with her or him to improve your health and your life.

For questions or additional information about the Accountable Care Organization

Visit: www.medicare.gov/acos.html
Or
Call: 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)
Or TTY 1-877-486-2048

To contact us:
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80 Versailles Blvd, Ste C
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Website:
http://www.christushealth.org/aco-public-report-information-louisiana

Beneficiary Help Line
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CHRISTUS Louisiana ACO Beneficiary Newsletter

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