Tips to Lower Your Blood Pressure As You Age

(StatePoint) As you age, there's a pretty good chance you'll eventually develop high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. In fact, according to one study, about 60% of people get hypertension by the time they reach age 60.

Fortunately, high blood pressure is highly treatable and manageable through a combination of lifestyle changes and, when necessary, medication. Unfortunately, it often appears without symptoms, putting people at risk of stroke, heart failure, kidney disease, and death, without them even knowing it.



"High blood pressure is sometimes called the silent killer," said Dr. Jennifer Ziemianin, chief medical officer for HealthSpring. "But we're not going to be quiet about it. We want older adults to know about the risks and take action to manage hypertension."

The first step is to get your blood pressure checked. The American Heart Association recommends adults get their blood pressure checked at least once a year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, high blood pressure is an upper reading of 130 or above or a lower reading of 80 or above.

If your blood pressure is high, you should check it regularly using an automatic, upper arm cuff-style monitor. These monitors are widely available, affordable and easy to use. You can ask your doctor for tips if needed.

Although hypertension generally can't be cured, it can be effectively managed through a variety of measures, Ziemianin said, including the following:

Exercise. Moderate activity, such as brisk walking or swimming, can lower high blood pressure. Always talk with your doctor before starting an exercise plan. If you belong to a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan, you may have access to a fitness program at no extra cost to you.

Eat a heart-healthy diet. Having a higher body mass index is a risk factor for hypertension. That's why it's important to eat a balanced diet, including vegetables, fruits, grains, protein, dairy and oils.

Cut down on salt. As you get older, the body becomes more sensitive to salt. Too much salt can increase your blood pressure. Limit the amount of salt in your diet by choosing low-sodium seasonings when preparing meals.

Drink less alcohol. Even moderate alcohol use can increase your blood pressure. The American Health Associations recommends no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women.

Quit smoking or don't start. Smoking increases your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and other health problems. It's never too late to quit. If you have a Medicare plan, you have access to counseling services to help you quit. Additionally, a Medicare Part D plan may cover medications to help you stop smoking.

Manage stress. Stress can increase your blood pressure. Medicare and MA plans cover counseling services, including telehealth in some cases, to help you cope with stress.

Talk to your doctor about medication. There are several medications available to help lower your blood pressure. You may need to try several types or combinations before you find a plan that works for you. Once you find the right plan, always take your medication as prescribed. If cost is an issue, an MA plan with drug coverage, or a standalone drug plan, helps pay for most blood pressure medications.

For more information about Medicare and MA benefits that can help you lower your blood pressure, visit https://www.healthspring.com.

"Lowering blood pressure, even a small amount, can make a big difference," Ziemianin said. "That's why it's so critical for you to identify high blood pressure early and then work very closely with your primary care physician to develop a plan for managing your hypertension so you can live a longer, healthier life."

Helping a Loved One Navigate Bladder Cancer Care



(StatePoint) A bladder cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming. As a caregiver, you can play an important role in navigating a loved one's journey. To identify meaningful ways to be helpful during a challenging time, consider the following insights into bladder cancer diagnosis and care:

Approaching healthcare provider visits: Beyond coordinating schedules and transportation, there are many ways to play a supportive role around medical visits. You can help your loved one prepare for appointments by discussing questions or concerns they may want to raise with their healthcare team. Consider attending these visits so you can take notes to help keep track of important information and next steps while your loved one focuses on the conversation. After the visit, you can check in with your loved one about what was discussed and whether there is anything they would like additional information or clarification on.

Understanding diagnosis and care options: An accurate diagnosis can provide important information about your loved one's bladder cancer and help inform conversations with their healthcare team about next steps in their care.

As you learn more about bladder cancer together, you might want to become familiar with the different procedures and approaches that may be available. This information can help you better understand the care journey and options to discuss with your loved one's healthcare team.

In particular, you may want to become educated about the cystoscopy procedure, because it is one very common approach, which urologists typically use to examine the bladder using standard white light, identify areas of concern, and collect tissue samples for further evaluation.

Another approach you may hear about is Blue Light Cystoscopy (BLC), which uses a combination of blue light and white light to examine the bladder lining. BLC can help urologists identify additional tumors that are difficult to see in white light alone. As a result, more suspicious lesions can be removed and the tissue tested by a pathologist. The resulting pathology report can give the healthcare team more accurate information for determining the severity of the cancer, which can inform subsequent care decisions.

Be sure that you or your loved one talks with the urologist about whether Blue Light Cystoscopy may be an option. To learn more about bladder cancer and Blue Light Cystoscopy, visit https://rebrand.ly/SP-Caregiving.

Staying informed and finding additional support: You can provide better caregiving by staying informed -- starting at home. Listen to your loved one, encourage open communication and be there when they need support. You should also consider turning to educational resources and support networks. Educating yourself will not only help you stay up to date on bladder cancer procedures and care, but it will also offer an opportunity to connect with others and navigate your own caregiving experience. It's also important to prioritize your own well-being and recognize when you personally may need additional support. Take time for yourself and be sure to coordinate with family and friends when help is needed.

As a care partner, you are an important figure in your loved one's care journey. Staying healthy, organized and informed, and understanding their individual needs and concerns, can help you provide meaningful practical and emotional support. Sponsored by Photocure Inc.

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