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UNDERSTANDING HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

~ by *Bobbie Bee Vang, LAc, MOM, acupuncturist*

High blood pressure, or hypertension, affects 50 million Americans or one in four adults. It is the most common reason for physician office visits and medication prescriptions in the United States.

Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80. If you have several readings over that you probably have pre- or high blood pressure and should be evaluated by a physician. Generally, medications are required if your blood pressure is higher than 140/90. Lifestyle changes and complementary therapies such as acupuncture and natural supplements can also play an important role in controlling blood pressure.

“High blood pressure often has many causes,” says David Hurrell, MD, cardiologist with the Minneapolis Heart Institute.® “Lifestyle may play a significant role in its development – that’s why a comprehensive approach to treatment is required, including diet, exercise and complementary therapies, as well as medications.”

Most people with high blood pressure have essential hypertension, which means the cause is unknown. About 10 percent of people with hypertension have secondary hypertension, which is caused by an abnormal condition like kidney disease or a hormone disorder. In many cases, treating the underlying condition alleviates high blood pressure.

A variety of drugs are available to control high blood pressure, but there is no cure for essential hypertension. “Medication treatment usually involves lifelong therapy – and interruptions in treatment can lead to dangerous ups and downs and early complications from this silent killer,” says Hurrell.

Doctors advise that people with hypertension lose weight, exercise and quit smoking. Dietary changes are also important. The dietary recommendations to lower blood

pressure are known as the DASH diet. It is low in fat, cholesterol, red meat and sweets. It emphasizes fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy food.

Acupuncture and natural supplements can also help control blood pressure. Evidence suggests that acupuncture helps the blood vessels relax which can reduce blood pressure. Natural supplements that may be recommended include certain herbs, co-enzyme Q 10, fish or flax seed oil, magnesium, taurine, arginine, calcium and vitamins E and C.

As with conventional drugs, natural substances may reduce blood pressure if taken consistently, but they do not cure high blood pressure. Talk to an acupuncturist or an Oriental medicine specialist to learn what supplements are best for your condition. You should discuss these therapies with your doctor to make sure they don’t interfere with other medications or health conditions.

Questions to ask your doctor about high blood pressure

- ❖ What is my normal blood pressure?
- ❖ When is blood pressure considered dangerously high?
- ❖ What is the cause of my hypertension?
- ❖ What are my chances of having a stroke?
- ❖ How often should my blood pressure be taken?
- ❖ Should I keep a record of my blood pressure?
- ❖ Should I change my diet? What should I eat?
- ❖ How can I learn how to cope with stress?
- ❖ Can you help me stop smoking?
- ❖ What kind of exercise programs can help control blood pressure?

If you have questions or would like to make an appointment for acupuncture, please call the Institute for Health and Healing Outpatient Center at 612-863-3333.



ENJOYING FOOD ENHANCES NUTRITION AND HEALTH

~ by Carolyn Denton, MA, LN, licensed nutritionist

You may be eating but are you being nourished? The nutritional value of food is dramatically diminished when eaten in an anxious or stressful state. When eating while anxious or stressed, people often experience belching, heartburn, cramping, gas, digestive pains and intense hunger – signs that the digestive system is not functioning as it should.

One of the most powerful examples of the relationship between the body, mind and nutrition is the stress response. As stress is perceived, the body initiates the fight or flight response. All metabolic functions shift toward survival. Within seconds of registering a stressful event, the body is in a state of readiness. It releases cortisol and increases the heart rate, blood pressure and respiration. Blood flow is routed away from the midsection and toward the head and limbs for power to flee or fight. Most importantly, the digestive system essentially shuts down. Digestive enzymes and stomach acid are reduced, impairing the breakdown of carbohydrate, fat and protein. Decreased blood flow to the small intestine reduces nutrient absorption. Perceiving that survival is at stake, the body does not waste energy digesting when it needs to be fleeing or fighting.

Imagine rushing to work while eating a muffin or grabbing a fast lunch at your desk. Since you are thinking about everything but the food you are eating, the body does not recognize that the stress you are experiencing is not life threatening. Instead, it simply perceives stress and initiates the flight or fight response. You will have eaten but not have been nourished because the food is not adequately digested.

The taste, aroma and visual appeal of food – and the pleasurable experience of eating it – nourishes our bodies as well as our sense of well-being. It is estimated that as much as 40 percent of the digestive response is related to how satisfying food is to all of our senses.

Making healthy food choices is only one part of good nutrition. Being in an ideal state to take in food is equally important. We may not have control over stressful events, but we can control how we adapt to stress and anxiety. At your next meal, take a moment to be aware of the food you are eating. See it. Smell it. Taste it. Give your body the signal that it is time to relax and enjoy – not fight or flee.

If you would like more information on nutrition and stress, or would like to make a nutrition consultation appointment, call 612-863-3333.



SOUNDS OF STRESS AND HEALING

~ by Kim Donley, MT-BC, MS, music therapist

Sound surrounds us. While we are aware of some sound, much of it is experienced outside of our conscious awareness. Yet all sound can affect our mood and stress levels.

We experience sound through our entire bodies, not just our ears. Sound waves travel through the air and are initially perceived by nerve cells in our skin. Messages are then sent to the brain, which activates various responses to the stimulus.

Responding to the rhythm in sound is part of human nature. Have you ever noticed that you tap a foot in time to music? Rhythm often makes tasks easier because of the way it organizes the body and brain. For example, many people find exercise easier to do with music because it

provides an external rhythm that the body will attempt to match and maintain.

When we are bombarded by noise, like construction noise, traffic or people talking, we can become over-stimulated. Reactions can vary from nervousness and agitation to fatigue and even depression. Even unobtrusive sound can affect us. Listen to the music being played in stores, restaurants and public places you visit. How do you react to it? Is it calming, energizing, disturbing? If sound bothers you, what can you do to change it?

We can control how sound affects us. An important step is to be more intentional about the sounds we put into our environments. For example, since we often breathe and

continued on next page



WASIE CORNER

News from the Wasie Fitness Center

STRENGTH TRAINING 101

An exercise routine should include a well-rounded strength-training program, such as lifting weights to strengthen bones, tendons, ligaments and muscles. Because this training builds muscle, it also is beneficial for weight loss. Muscle is partly responsible for the amount of calories you burn. As muscle mass increases, the rate at which you burn calories also increases, making it easier to maintain a healthy weight.

A strength program should include at least one exercise for every major muscle group. Choose a weight amount that fatigues muscles after eight to 12 slow and controlled repetitions. Try to exercise each muscle group two or three times a week and allow at least 24 hours rest between workouts.

If you are just beginning a strength-training program you need to decide which type of equipment to use: free weights (also called dumbbells) or machines. Listed below are some pros and cons of each. A fitness professional can help you design an appropriate exercise program and teach proper technique.

Free weights

Advantages

- ❖ exercises are often more like the movements needed for specific sports
- ❖ many different exercises are done with a set of dumbbells, making them more versatile



- ❖ they are inexpensive, portable and take up little space
- ❖ stabilizing muscles are strengthened, helping support your joints and improve movement.

Disadvantages

- ❖ must learn to balance the weight while exerting force
- ❖ because technique is so important, it may be difficult to isolate specific muscles
- ❖ free weights can be swung for momentum instead of lifted slowly, decreasing the effectiveness of your workout.

Machines

Advantages

- ❖ generally safer and easier to use – especially helpful for beginners
- ❖ more readily isolate a specific muscle or muscle group
- ❖ set range of motion makes it harder to cheat when muscles begin to fatigue
- ❖ workouts are quicker because it is easy to move among machines and change resistance.

Disadvantages

- ❖ set range of motion limits the involvement of stabilizing muscles
- ❖ generally, each is designed for one type of exercise – impractical for home use
- ❖ designed for the average-size person. If you are tall or short, some machines are difficult to use.



SOUNDS OF STRESS AND HEALING continued from previous page

move in time to music or rhythm, we need to be mindful of the types of music we choose to listen to while driving, exercising, dining, working or relaxing.

Sound can contribute to stress as well as to healing. Being aware of sound and how we react is one more technique

to help manage stress. It can also apply to other sources of stress; it's important to find the cause and learn how to adjust our environment to create healing.

If you are interested in learning more about music and healing, call 612-863-6124.





**September/October
2005**

INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND HEALING: **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Registration is required for all classes unless otherwise noted. To register or for more information, call 612-863-3333.

Series Programs

Beginning Gentle Yoga
❖ 6-week series
❖ Thursdays beginning Sept. 15, and Oct. 27, 5:30-6:45 p.m.

❖ \$79

Chair Yoga

❖ 6-week series
❖ Thursdays beginning Sept. 15, and Oct. 27, 4-5:15 p.m.

❖ \$79

Yoga for the Lower Back

❖ 6-week series
❖ Mondays beginning Sept. 19, and Nov. 7, 5:30-6:45 p.m.

❖ \$79

Therapeutic Yoga for Cancer

❖ 6-week series
❖ Mondays beginning Sept. 19, and Nov. 7, 7-8:15 p.m.

❖ \$79

T'ai Chi Chih® Joy through Movement

❖ 8-week series
❖ Tuesdays beginning Sept. 20, 5-6 p.m.

❖ \$99

One-Time Classes

Acid Reflux: What a Pain

❖ Monday, Sept. 12, 6:30-8 p.m.
❖ 1.5 CEUs available for nurses
❖ \$10

Acupuncture and Soft Tissue Injury

❖ Tuesday, Sept. 13, 7-8 p.m.
❖ 1 CEU available for nurses
❖ \$10

Couples Massage

❖ Wednesday, Sept. 14, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
❖ \$40 per couple

Healing Her Heart: Stress Mastery for Women

❖ Wednesday, Sept. 21, 6:30-8 p.m.
❖ 1.5 CEUs for nurses
❖ \$10

Drum Your Stress Away

❖ Thursday, Sept. 22, 7-8 p.m.
❖ \$20

Community Drum Circle

❖ Thursdays, Sept. 15, and Oct. 20, 7-8 p.m.
❖ \$5/session

The "Art" of Meditation

❖ Collage – Wednesday, Sept. 28, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
❖ Painting – Wednesday, Oct. 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
❖ \$30 each/\$50 for both

Reducing Stress: A Mini-Clinic

❖ Wednesday, Oct. 5, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
❖ 2 CEUs for nurses
❖ \$20

Acupuncture for Rheumatoid Arthritis

❖ Wednesday, Oct. 26, 7-8 p.m.
❖ 1 CEU for nurses
❖ \$10

Special Events

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

❖ 8-week series
❖ Tuesdays starting Sept. 20, 6:30-9 p.m. plus Sunday, Oct. 30, all day
❖ \$300 plus approximately \$45 for books and tapes

Mandala Making Workshop

❖ Wednesday, Oct. 19, 6-9 p.m.
❖ \$40

The Art of Healing

❖ New exhibit "Healing Mandalas"
❖ Opens Friday, Oct. 7, 6:30-9 p.m.
❖ Includes presentation by artist Richard Bonk, M Ed