Mindfully controlling high blood pressure

The National Institutes of Health states that one in three adults in the U.S. suffers from high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. Left untreated, this condition contributes to cardiovascular disease, kidney disease and other health problems.

Despite its prevalence, many people do not seek treatment for their hypertension because they don’t realize that they have the condition. In fact, medical professionals often call high blood pressure “the silent killer” because it often has no symptoms.

Fortunately, high blood pressure can be painlessly and inexpensively diagnosed through a standard blood pressure check. If you don’t currently have a primary health care provider, you can get free blood pressure checks at local health fairs, pharmacies and neighborhood health care clinics.

Hypertension is treated with a combination of medications and lifestyle changes. Many people do the following to control or prevent high blood pressure:

✦ Eat a healthy diet.
✦ Exercise regularly.
✦ Reduce stress.
✦ Get better sleep.

Reserving some quiet time each week can also help you manage stress levels. For many people, this can take place during services in a house of worship.

Prayer: Dear God, I thank you for the gift of health. Help me to be mindful of this gift and to guard it each and every day. Amen.


Stroke awareness

Strokes happen when there is a disruption in blood flow to part of the brain caused by a clot or a ruptured blood vessel. Stroke damage can be severe and cause permanent disability or death.

Several stroke risk factors are uncontrollable, such as age, race and family history. Still, you can minimize many risk factors with appropriate lifestyle changes. These include:

✦ Eating better and exercising regularly
✦ Getting treatment for high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease
✦ Reducing or eliminating alcohol and tobacco use

In addition, talk to your doctor about your risk of stroke and a plan for addressing controllable risk factors.

The National Stroke Association suggests that you remember the word “FAST” if you suspect someone is having a stroke:

Face: Ask the person to smile. Facial drooping on one side suggests a stroke.

Arms: Ask the person to raise both arms. One arm driving downward can be a symptom of stroke.

Speech: Ask the person to say a simple phrase. Slurred or strange speech can be a stroke symptom.

Time: If any of these symptoms are present, call 911 immediately.

A severe headache with no apparent cause can also be a stroke symptom. If you or someone you know has any of these symptoms, get medical attention right away.

The latest stroke treatments are very effective but must be administered within three hours of the start of a stroke. Every minute counts, and only a medical professional can determine whether symptoms are stroke-related or not. Call 911 or get to the emergency room as soon as possible.