A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Controlling Hypertension

Self-Reported Hypertension and Use of Antihypertensive Medications Among Adults
– United States, 2005-2009
Recorded: April 2, 2013; posted: April 4, 2013

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Karen Hunter] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Karen Hunter, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, affects one third of US adults and is a leading causes of heart disease and stroke. A recent study found an increase in self-reported high blood pressure among US adults, and an increase in the use of medications to control high blood pressure.

Dr. Fleetwood Loustalot is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. He's joining us today to discuss the importance of controlling high blood pressure. Welcome to the show, Dr. Loustalot.

[Dr. Loustalot] Thanks, Karen.

[Karen Hunter] Dr. Loustalot, what is high blood pressure?

[Dr. Loustalot] Well, blood pressure measurements are made up of two numbers – a systolic blood pressure and a diastolic blood pressure. The systolic pressure is on the top and the diastolic is on the bottom. And we consider a blood pressure measurement of more than 140/90 to be high blood pressure. However, this is *high* blood pressure. Ideally, your blood pressure should be less than 120/80. And we are very concerned about high blood pressure. It is a very common condition in US adults. It's also a primary risk factor for heart disease and stroke, the first and fourth leading cause of death in the US.

[Karen Hunter] Now, what causes high blood pressure?

[Dr. Loustalot] Well, there is not a specific cause of high blood pressure, in most cases. There are many factors that contribute, or play a role, in the development of high blood pressure. Those could be increasing age or family history, but also may be smoking, being overweight or obese, eating too much salt or sodium in the diet, not regularly engaging in physical activity, or drinking too much alcohol.

[Karen Hunter] What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

[Dr. Loustalot] Well, Karen, many times there are no recognizable symptoms for high blood pressure. It is many times referred to as the *silent killer*. This is why it's so important to get your blood pressure screened by your health care provider or at other locations.

[Karen Hunter] How can people prevent or control high blood pressure?

[Dr. Loustalot] There are many things people can do. If you're on medications for high blood pressure, take them regularly, and as prescribed. Exercise regularly. Current guidelines recommend that we get about 150 minutes a week of physical activity, but some activity is always better than none and we should do muscle strengthening activities, if available. We should also maintain a healthy weight; eat a healthy diet, especially one that is low in sodium; limit the amount of alcohol that we intake; and if you are smoking, seek support to stop. And lastly, actively engage in monitoring blood pressure, whether it's at your home or another location, and record those measurements and share them with your health care provider.

[Karen Hunter] Where can listeners get more information about high blood pressure?

[Dr. Loustalot] Lisetners can go to cdc.gov/bloodpressure.

[Karen Hunter] Thanks, Dr. Loustalot. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Fleetwood Loustalot about the importance of controlling high blood pressure.

You can help prevent or control high blood pressure by maintaining a healthy weight, engaging in regular exercise, not smoking, and eating a healthy diet that includes foods low in sodium; however, some people need medication to manage the condition. Have your blood pressure checked regularly and, if it's high, talk with your health care provider about ways to control it.

Until next time, be well. This is Karen Hunter for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.