

African Americans and High Blood Pressure

Introduction

In this video you will hear from Kaiser Permanente members with hypertension or high blood pressure and learn about the changes that they were able to make in their lives to get their blood pressure under control. In addition to member stories this video also contains more because on how to reduce your sodium intake, adhere to your blood pressure medications and other strategies to help you get your blood pressure under control.

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And I stayed there the night. The next morning they had me in surgery.

My high blood pressure is what contributed to my heart attack and I had to change my lifestyle.

I take my blood pressure medicine consistently now. I make sure that the first thing I do in the morning-- I have my medicine right by my coffee pot.

The biggest challenge for me is I like salt. I like pretzels. I like chips. I like anything that has that little kick of salt in it. And so I had to make the changes to find other snacks that were low in sodium and to kind of change my mind that I like other things besides chips. I decided that I wouldn't buy kettle chips anymore. That was hard you know going into the supermarket and deciding not to get it because when it's in the house it became a challenge for me.

I bought a pair of tennis shoes for the first time in over 30 years. I bought a little headset radio, whatever it took to get me moving and keep moving.

I'm not going to be running no marathons or anything like that but I do want to be around to see who crosses the line.

It makes all the sense in the world to me to just take the time to do something for yourself that's going to benefit not only you-- not only benefit yourself it's going to benefit people that care about you.

There are people that depend on you and you want to be around for them.

My mother was a dialysis patient and I would go with her while she was on dialysis and most of the people in dialysis were either blood pressure patients or diabetes patients. And you know they say that blood pressure is the silent killer so these people, I spoke with them at dialysis, they said that they felt well but they didn't know that their blood

pressure was so high. They were walking around with high blood pressure and I said I don't want to be a dialysis patient. I can do something about this. I can take control of my life.

High blood pressure is usually a lifelong problem but it can be controlled with healthy lifestyle changes and medication. Decide today what steps you will take to get your blood pressure under control.

Calvin

Dr. Reese told me and say my blood pressure's kind of high and so we need to start doing something about it and so she described the first medications for it and from then on I was just taking the medications and we had to change it a few times because of allergies but worked it out. We kept working on it till we got the right medication for it.

My eating habits and no exercise...

It was no surprise to me. It was just something like, you know, I felt like it finally caught up with me like it did to everybody else in my family.

Aunts and grandmothers that had strokes. I know my mother suffered with it.

Seen people in nursing homes. I've seen people in coffins. I was trying to you know avoid that as long as I could. And so it was an easy transition for me to know that something was wrong and something can be corrected. And so that's the route that I took.

One of the things that really helped turn things around was the classes that were offered and they showed us what a big role foods play in our lives. The amount of foods you eat and way that they are prepared, the regimen that you turn to is not as difficult as people think change is especially when the change is for the better.

My parents raised us all to eat everything on your plate and so now I can do that but I don't put a whole lot on the plate. At least I try to keep a whole lot off the plate.

Instead of eating a couple of chili dogs and flopping on the couch watching TV now I know I can't do it like that anymore.

I bought a pair of tennis shoes for the first time in over 30 years. I bought a little headset radio too. Whatever it took to get me moving and keep moving.

I work from eleven to seven. I get off in the morning at 7:00 AM and so I make my way to the park. I know if I get home and I sit down too long if I don't nod off then I know I'm not going to get anything accomplished but the idea is to keep myself motivated enough to the point I've got to get in a couple of laps today. That word thrive really pumped me and that's where I wanted-- you know like I said I'm not going to be running no marathons or anything like that but I do want to be around to see who crosses the line.

You've got to think and hope that there is something more in you than just mediocrity.

My faith in God is going to take me wherever I need to go and just keeping that in the forefront in my mind. And we have to make that choices. That's what helps to having faith in God is when you make choices that He desires for you you can go a long way and you're going to go a long way just having that knowledge that the creator of the universe

loves you enough that tells you put the French fry. No, eat the carrot. And I can live with that and He wants me to and I want to.

It makes all the sense in the world to me to just take the time to do something for yourself that's going to not only benefit yourself it's going to benefit people that care about you.

There are people that depend on you and you want to be around for them.

I've got grandkids that are teenagers and some of them are coming to be teenagers and obviously these are things I want to be around for.

I want to live better as I get older and that's important to me. I know it's important to the people that I love and the people that love me.

June

Even though I took a blood pressure pill I would come back to the doctor and my blood pressure was still not where she wanted it and I decided to do my research. So I tried to eliminate certain foods and not eat so much fast food. It still was not going down.

And I met a lady that told me I should try a plant-based diet where I ate loads of fruits and vegetables, nuts, beans, seeds. I eliminated all meat from my diet. Found out that meat carries a lot of sodium. Dairy, things such as milk and cheese have quite a bit of sodium. I decided to eliminate those things from my diet. And when I went back to see the doctor she was amazed at how not only had my blood pressure gone down I had lost 30 pounds. And we were happy about that.

I even went onto the internet to read about different kinds of recipes. I use a lot of spices. I go to farmer's markets and I see food that I've never seen and I ask what kind of vegetable is this and how do you prepare this? I take it home. I have a ball experimenting with different kinds of fruits and vegetables.

If I would have known that I would have enjoyed eating as much as I do now I would have switched many, many years ago. I think that as Americans we think that meat is the center of our attention. We used to say what am I cooking for dinner today? I think I'll have chicken and we would not think about our vegetables. Now I think what am I going to cook today? Well I think I'll have kale. I think I'll have a carrot salad.

And I've learned to explore many spices. I don't use sodium. If I use any salt at all I measure it, maybe an eighth of a teaspoon to go on maybe two servings of a vegetable. But there are many spices on the market that give your food a lot of flavor without the salt.

I'm not a person who likes to exercise a lot. I can find other things I would rather do but I realize that exercise is a necessity.

Every day I think okay in what ways can I move today? I'm going to have a really, really busy schedule. I know I can't take out my 45 minutes to go walking up on the hill today so how can I move today?

When I'm at school working instead of sitting in the chair I tend to walk up and down the aisles in the classroom observing my students.

Parking far away when I'm at the grocery store so I have longer walk and more steps to take. When I get home instead of taking all six bags, three on one arm and three on the other, I make six trips.

Those are little things that I do to squeeze in or sneak in exercise.

I would say the biggest challenge for getting my blood pressure under control was having dinners with family members, going out to parties and things like that because very often they don't have a lot of things that a person who's trying to get their pressure under control can eat. So the way that I dealt with that was I would always offer to bring something. Going to restaurants I would sneak in my own salad dressing. Salad dressings tend to have a lot of sodium and I would order salads and I was able to go on and socialize and that was the way that I dealt with that.

Dr. Reese is a great doctor. She has been my doctor for quite a few years and she just has the words that get you motivated. She tells me you want to be around for your children. You want to live a healthy life. And she encourages me. And I realized that as a patient doctors can only do so much. When we go into the office to see our doctor our doctors can tell us what to do but it's up to us to follow through.

No one will take care of us but ourselves. We have to be our own cheerleader. We have to motivate our own self.

I think that there were a few things that motivated me to get my blood pressure under control. I do have a family and I love to be with my family. I wanted to be around. But also I wanted to feel good, just to feel healthy and feel good.

My mother was a dialysis patient and I would go with her while she was on dialysis and most of the people in dialysis were either high blood pressure patients or diabetes patients. And you know they say that high blood pressure is the silent killer so these people said-- you know I spoke with them at dialysis, they said that they felt well but they didn't know that their blood pressure was so high. They were walking around with high blood pressure. And I said I don't want to be a dialysis patient. I can do something about this. I can take control of my life. And I believe that was also a big motivator for me.

What is high blood pressure?

Hypertension is high blood pressure.

When your blood pressure is high the heart must work harder to pump the same amount of blood through your blood vessels.

It's normal for your blood pressure to go up and down throughout the day but it is considered too high when it stays above 140 over 90 most of the time.

This can lead to serious problems such as heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, dialysis and heart failure.

The good news is that blood pressure is treatable and there are many things you can do to take action and get your blood pressure under control. One way to take action is to check your blood pressure regularly and know your numbers.

The top number is the systolic number. The goal for most patients is to have that number below 140.

The bottom number is the diastolic number. Our goal for most patients is to have that number below 90.

There are other ways to take action to get your blood pressure under control. First maintain a healthy weight.

Your blood pressure rises as your body weight increases.

Losing even 10 pounds can help to lower your blood pressure.

And remember there's no magic formula for weight loss.

You have to eat fewer calories than you burn up.

It's best to work out some combination of both eating less and being more physically active.

Be physically active for 30 minutes most days of the week.

Regular physical activity not only makes your heart stronger but also lowers your blood pressure.

Exercise can include activities such as walking, gardening or dancing.

You can break up your workout into three 10-minute sessions and get the same benefit as one 30-minute session.

Next reduce sodium or salt in your diet.

African Americans, patients 50 years or older, and those with diabetes or kidney disease are more sensitive to salt and should consume no more than 1500 milligrams of sodium a day.

Finally follow up with your primary care physician at least once a year. Build a relationship with your doctor through good communication.

Write down questions before your visit with your doctor and be honest with them during your visit. If there's something about your care plan that you do not agree with or you don't understand please let your doctor know.

Shedrick

When I was 56-years old I had a heart attack and I drove myself to the hospital.

And I stayed there the night. The next morning they had me in surgery.

My high blood pressure is what contributed to my heart attack and I had to change my lifestyle.

I started by taking a medication. And at first the medication was too strong and my doctor started changing the dosage.

And everything has been stable ever since.

I take my blood pressure medicine consistently now. I make sure that the first thing I do in the morning-- I have my medicine right by my coffee pot. So when I get up in the morning I get my cup of coffee and I take my medication.

Well the changes I made in my diet was due to the fact that my wife is a diabetic and it was easier for me to change my diet by eating what she did instead of her fixing meals specifically for me. So we came together and we just found the foods that we liked as a diabetic and we'd switch them up so we don't get burned out on the same stuff.

So I had to figure out what I can eat and how much I can eat and that was the problem. And so I started exercising more and eating less and it started to balance out.

The hardest part for me was giving up steak stuff but now I eat salmon, chicken but I still every now and then I reward myself with a steak.

I want to be healthy. I want to be here. I have a 14-year old daughter that's my last child.

I want to be here to see her grown, married and grandkids so I'm doing what I can to see that happen.

Marie

When I was informed that I had it I was immediately put on a diet and medication to bring it down.

It did work.

At this point it's normal with medication. It's controlled with medication.

I have a schedule. You know I have my medication put out where when I get up in the morning I know what medications I'm going to take, I know what food I need to eat with them.

It's important to take your blood pressure medicine and the exercise to keep living.

I started square dancing and square dancing is very good. You can't concentrate anything but what the caller so that's very good. And I go to the gym and where I live I walk up 13 stairs every day, four or five times a day, so that helps.

It wasn't easy but I was determined. And I have family around me as my support group so that helped a great deal.

It was a long process if we're thinking in terms of about a year to really work on it and get it working. It's not going to go away in a day or a month or so but you have to work at it and stick with it.

My doctor helped me a great deal by letting me know the damage it was doing to my body. That I had to follow the rules if I wanted to live a productive life and do things I want to do and travel, whatever.

You want to live you do what you should do.

I have great grandchildren and one great great grandchild so it's important for me to stay active so I can be with them.

Sodium and high blood pressure

Sodium is a very big deal with our health. Sodium is a naturally occurring electrolyte. It's in food. It's in about everything you eat. And it's found in especially high amounts in processed food, in restaurant food and fast food.

We actually need some sodium. We need 500 milligrams of sodium a day.

Sodium is used in our body by the cells for nerve transmission for the cells to communicate with one another.

For any American that has high blood pressure or chronic kidney disease or is over age 50 or is African American of any age needs to limit their sodium to 1500 milligrams per day.

The average American consumes somewhere between 3,500 milligrams and 5,000 milligrams of sodium per day.

For those people that have high blood pressure sodium in those large amounts is especially bad because the sodium makes us hold onto fluid and therefore it actually raises the blood pressure. It makes blood pressure much harder to control.

Sodium is actually much more important for African Americans to pay attention to because of something called salt sensitivity.

The effect of sodium raising blood pressure is actually much more enhanced in anyone who has African American heritage.

Most people think that it might come from their salt shaker at home but it doesn't. eighty percent of that sodium comes from eating out at restaurants, fast food and also processed food.

Processed food might be things that surprise people. A pickle for example has been processed, so a pickle that's not made at home. Pickles contain anywhere from five hundred to a thousand milligrams of sodium. Processed meats would be like bacon and also bologna or hot dogs. A hot dog can have anywhere from eight hundred to a thousand milligrams of sodium in just one dog.

Some common burgers that we love at some of our favorite fast food places contain anywhere from one thousand five hundred up to two or even three thousand milligrams of sodium per burger. That's before any French fries and that's before soda. There's even sodium in soda.

We would encourage people not to eat out at fast food very often at all. Make that a special trip, very rare.

Cooking at home, eating at home is the safest healthiest way to go.

Most foods are going to have sodium in them because sodium is naturally occurring in the ground as a trace element so it's going to appear in any meats that we eat, any dairy products and certainly any vegetables that are grown out of the ground. So even natural, even fresh foods have naturally occurring sodium in them. It's part of the reason why most people find that they could reach their daily limit pretty quickly from even eating just fresh food.

Surprises might be cottage cheese for example which has about 240 milligrams per half cup serving.

American cheese for a one ounce serving might have upwards of a hundred to two hundred milligrams per serving. So sodium is really present everywhere.

A lot of baked goods will also have a lot of sodium in them too partially because of the baking soda and also we use salt in a lot of baked goods because it's a nice contrast with the sugar. So when you see a lot more sugar being added to a product generally there's going to also be a lot more sodium. The same would go for ice cream and other sweets and candies. More sugar usually equals more salt.

Soups tend to be some of our worst sodium offenders and ramen tends to be one of the worst of the worst.

In one serving of ramen there can be anywhere from 800 to 1100 milligrams of sodium.

And ramen tends to come in those packages that are really convenient for us whether it's a Styrofoam cup or a little package plastic wrap and that is usually two servings in that package. So if you were to eat both which most people tend to do you're going to get somewhere between 1600 and 2400 milligrams of sodium in that serving.

A person with high blood pressure who should limit their sodium to 1500 milligrams would already be at almost double their daily in just that one mealtime.

The very good news is that if you do lower your sodium intake your blood pressure will come down. In many studies it's shown to actually happen within just a couple of weeks.

It's actually surprisingly easy to start to reduce your salt.

Usually if you just start day by day to cut back little bit by little bit your taste buds actually change every two weeks. So you'll get used to eating less salt. You won't even miss it. If you keep doing that cutting back a little bit every two weeks between six and twelve weeks later you could be completely off all additional salt.

Not only will food still taste the same, you'll enjoy it, but if you were to try to go back and eat the way that you used to eat food would generally be bitter and some patients have

reported that it actually burns their tongue. So they don't miss the salt. It's just a matter of taking it slow.

The best way for people to find out how much sodium is in the food that they're eating is to actually take the package turn the product over and read the nutrition facts label. Even if you're at a restaurant or a larger chain you can request that information and it's usually available in the larger chains either there at the restaurant or on their websites. There's even new apps for people that have smart phones.

And right there in the restaurant as long as you have a signal you can look up nutrition fact information right away at the store.

I always caution people to make sure that you pay attention to the serving size and that you know for that individual item what that serving size might be whether it's how many cookies or how many crackers or how many cups for example. And then how many serving sizes are in that package. Sometimes labels can be misleading and there might be two or three servings in the package so you would have to double or triple the amount of sodium to really understand how much sodium you're getting if you eat that prepared processed food.

One of the best ways to lower your salt intake at home is to not cook with salt.

And then to make your food more flavorful to use herbs, spices, lemon, lime. One could even use vinegar. Say for example in cooking vegetables and greens you could sauté your fish, meat or vegetables in red wine and white wine as well because that alcohol will actually evaporate off while you're cooking but it'll leave behind the zing that most people want from their salt.

If you go to the store and you buy a product that says reduced sodium it's important to know that that only means that there is a 25 percent reduction in the sodium content of that product. If it's already a larger amount of sodium in it it's probably guaranteed that even at that reduced level it's still too high especially for someone with high blood pressure.

I'd recommend still turning the can over or turning that product over, reading the nutrition fact label looking for sodium right there and see for each individual meal we'd hoped that it would be under 500 milligrams per meal.

Looking for a product that says sodium-free would actually be better.

And even best would be to buy fresh food.

People with high blood pressure can eat out.

We'd like you to reserve those times for maybe holidays or special celebrations with your friends and family and cook most of your meals at home. When you do eat out we would

encourage you to speak with the wait staff and let them know that you're watching your sodium.

Request that the chef make a low salt or no salt special sauce or meal for you.

Michelle

When I found out that I had high blood pressure I was devastated. In fact I began to wonder well, what have I been doing that hasn't worked? But then I thought my father has high blood pressure.

I made some immediate changes. The very first thing I did was talk to my husband because he has high blood pressure too and we thought together that we could work on ourselves.

We felt like together we could cook healthier. I felt like I was cooking healthy but healthier.

The second thing we discussed was having a regular exercise regimen.

I always rode my bike. And we rode together my husband and I but we decided that we would ride more. So instead of riding two to three days we bumped it up to four to five days. We also decided that we would take an exercise class and we started doing this twice a week.

We have had such an enjoyable time exploring the different vegetables, the colors and so not just your regular string beans but now it's cabbage, green cabbage, purple cabbage, enjoying a lot of the beans and we also eat less meat but we focus in on salmon and chicken breasts and do less salt so very little sodium. I have found the no-salt seasoning that I use for everything and try to use herbs like basil and some of the other herbs to season our foods.

The changes were not so hard for me because I think it starts in your head. You start working what can I do and knowing that it's going to benefit my body.

I think the challenge was what can I do to spice up our diet? So getting on the internet and finding new recipes and that became fun.

The biggest challenge for me is I like salt. I like pretzels. I like chips. I like anything that has that little kick of salt in it. And so I had to make the changes to find other snacks that were low in sodium and to kind of change my mind that I like other things besides chips. I decided that I wouldn't buy kettle chips anymore. That was hard you know going into the supermarket and deciding not to get it because when it's in the house it became a challenge for me.

Not only did I get my blood pressure under control but I had the benefit of losing 20 pounds.

From experience I felt like listening to my doctor and doing what I was told and taking the blood pressure medicine and since she knew that I was already a person that was active she told me some specifics of what to do as far as diet and as far as increasing my

physical activity. The encouragement that I got from her even in my visits when I started the weight loss she was very encouraging which of course that makes you want to lose a little more and do the best that you can. In fact I think that I started doing some of these things so by the time I would come back she would notice a difference.

It's all about balance. So I believe that mentally, spiritually and physically I'm doing everything to be the best that I can be.

I was motivated to keep my blood pressure under control and to change my lifestyle because I have a lot to live for. I have grandchildren and I felt like if I decided to make the changes that these changes were good enough for me to pass on to my family. So I began to do it for me and my husband and then we decided to educate our family. We began one family member at a time. I began to work with my daughter and she made changes to her entire family's diet.

Jimmy

When I found out I had high blood pressure I wondered how I got it. I was puzzled. And I was shocked. And then I realized that my mother had high blood pressure.

I eliminated a lot of sodium, a lot of carbohydrates in my diet. I eliminated all the soft drinks and drank more water and began a regimen of exercise and that has lowered my blood pressure. I had lost 45 pounds this past year and I feel a lot better. I feel like a new person.

I walk anywhere from two miles to five miles. And on Tuesdays my wife and I ride down to West LA College and we work out there and ride back, that's about 10 miles roundtrip. And Wednesdays we work out in the yard. We do gardening. And Fridays we take a long walk or we'll go down to the beach and we will ride for maybe 25 miles. And Saturdays we take a short ride in the neighborhood.

Changing my lifestyle was difficult. When we put it down on paper and decided what we were going to do it sounded very easy. But once we start adding it to our daily lifestyle it was difficult because we had to set aside time to exercise, to walk, to ride our bicycles and then to eat right. And sometimes I had urges. I want to eat something sweet and so then I would substitute it for fruit. And when I wanted to drink a cola or something I would just drink water, plain water or ice water.

My faith is part of my lifestyle as well and my faith causes me to have hope, to have belief and to be motivated to do things that are good for my body. Bible speaks about your body as being a temple and what we put in our bodies is important to how we feel, how we treat each other and just how we live. And so I wanted to be obedient. I am obedient to my faith and obedient to my doctor's orders.

My motivation for controlling my blood pressure was to extend my life. And my wife and I have been married 33 years and I wanted to grow older with her and to see our grandchildren to adulthood.

Just to feel a lot better with myself. I would feel tired at times.

I'm more energetic and able to do a lot more activity than I was accustomed to doing.

Blood pressure medication

You may have heard many different things about high blood pressure. To get the most from your treatment it helps to start with some facts.

Feeling okay does not mean your blood pressure is under control because most of the time high blood pressure doesn't cause any symptoms.

Similarly feeling bad doesn't mean it's out of control.

The only way to know for sure is to check your pressure regularly.

Blood pressure medications need to be taken every day even when you're feeling well.

Medications are vital to controlling your high blood pressure and need to be taken on a daily basis in order to prevent a heart attack, a stroke or heart failure.

Stopping your medication suddenly may cause a dangerous increase in pressure. So if you're having any issues with taking your blood pressure medications remember to consult with your doctor before stopping.

It may seem hard at first to take your medications every day but just like putting your shoes on in the morning or brushing your teeth at night it gets easier when you make it a part of your daily routine.

Tools such as a weekly pillbox can help you remember to take your medications every day.

When you start a new medication work with your doctor to get the right drug and dose level for you. If you have any side effects be sure to tell your doctor so that your medications can be adjusted.

If you're concerned about cost let your doctor know and ask about our Medical Financial Assistance Program.

If you qualify you can receive your prescriptions at no cost.

Some over the counter medications and dietary supplements can raise your blood pressure.

Be sure to tell your doctor about any non-prescription drugs that may make it harder for you to bring your blood pressure under control.

It's important to know that no single medication works perfectly to control blood pressure and each medication works in different ways. So most patients with hypertension need to take more than one medication.

Also remember that medications work best when they are combined with a healthy low-salt diet and daily exercise.

High blood pressure is usually a lifelong problem but it can be controlled with healthy lifestyle changes and medication. Decide today what steps you will take to get your blood pressure under control.

Tyrone

Dr. [inaudible] has been my doctor since 1986 I believe and she would do all my-- every year before I go fight in the Police Olympics because I was a fighter she'd have to give me my physical and she'd give me my physical and then as I, I guess, in the later years in '96 and '97 I wasn't fighting anymore but then when my blood pressure was going up she got on me about it and says hey, you're getting fat. You're not taking care of yourself. You're not exercising. You're not doing-- she says I know a better person than that. and she motivated me to make sure that I get out there and do my thing you know and keep my blood pressure down and do the healthy thing.

I had to. I start exercising a little more and get back out there and start doing things that will keep my blood pressure down.

I walk approximately three and half, four miles three or four times a week.

Certain things I don't do anymore. Like I used to be-- oh well I go out with the boys drinking every once in a while and so I curtailed that a lot.

I read labels and I find there's a lot of sodium and a lot of salt into the foods. I won't eat it.

I take my blood pressure medication consistently because I know that's the only way that I'll be able to control it not only with my diet and my exercise but my medication. I have to take a morning dose and an evening dose.

And I've been diligently taking it since 1997.

I wouldn't live very long if I didn't take it so I just take it.

For me specifically I would advise that you take your medication like you're supposed to. I know there are a lot of strong males out there and they believe there's this macho image and everything but if you want to continue to live and have a great life you've got to take your medication.

Now I've got my grandchildren so I want to make sure that I see them grow up. And plus I just retired last year in 2011 so I want to make sure that I collect that pension for a long time.

Ernestine

When I found out I had high blood pressure I was very concerned and I started talking to people in my family, my senior folks like my mother or my grandparents, aunties and found that many of them had high blood pressure problems and I wanted to do better because my mother had several strokes and my grandparents both had heart issues. I had an auntie even die from a massive coronary attack. So I had a reason to do better.

My doctor helped me to learn to control my blood pressure by telling me how it would affect me especially as I age and that I would have to take medication to control it for probably many years and she even made sure that I went to a health education class on blood pressure.

I had to change the way I was eating.

I started by deleting meats and especially pork and sodium because I loved salty foods but I did give up real salt and I went to salt substitutes and now I find years later I don't really need much salt in my food at all.

Sometimes when I'm over at families or with friends I want to eat with them or do whatever they're doing and I don't like saying I can't eat your food because it's a little too salty. So I may have a little just much smaller serving.

I had to concentrate on exercising.

I found when I exercise more consistently that my blood pressure was more consistently low.

I will ride my recumbent bike for 45 minutes to an hour at least four to five days a week.

And when there was no exercise equipment I made sure I just walked.

I do monitor my blood pressure at home because sometimes I'm amazed that it'll go up a little. And monitoring my blood pressure it really helped me take charge of it and know that what's normal and when it's not normal I must admit that I'm not happy at all so I'll do things. I'll meditate. I'll do a little yoga or get on my bike and take it again a couple hours later and it's usually better.

My blood pressure medication was lowered about three years ago and just recently at my last physical my doctor decided that I may come off of blood pressure medication eventually because I'm trying real hard to eat right, exercise right.

Actually I didn't like being on medication at all but I knew that it was best for me to stay on medication even when it became a challenge.

I thought I wanted a tummy tuck or some kind of surgical procedure which my doctor would not hear of so she had me register in a Freedom from Fat class.

And you learn a lot. During the class we're constantly looking at videos and we had workbooks to work through concerning blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes.

The best part of the class was when I graduated I had lost 30 pounds.

One thing I really learned as a part of my faith was that the Lord gave me this temple and he expects me to take care of it. And it's really helped me through my journey.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to watch this video. We wanted to share this information with you because high blood pressure is a serious condition and a leading cause of heart attack and stroke in the United States.

In the general population it affects 30 percent of adults and in the African American population it affects 40 percent of adults.

We hope that listening to stories of other Kaiser Permanente members will help you manage your high blood pressure.

As you have just heard there are many ways in which you can control your blood pressure and improve your overall well-being.

For Shedrick putting his medication by his coffee pot helped him to remember to take his blood pressure medication every morning.

For June parking farther away from the grocery store helped her sneak exercise into her busy life.

And for all of the members featured in this video focusing on their family and the reasons they wanted to live a long and healthy life motivated them to take the steps necessary to get their blood pressure under control. We highly encourage you to think about actions you can take to lower your blood pressure and to share your ideas and the information in this video with your family and friends. Doing so will help lower the risk of serious complications, not only for yourself, but for those you love.

We at Kaiser Permanente are here to support your commitment to improving your total health and keeping your blood pressure under control. May you be well and thrive.