READER WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE NEEDS TO EXERCISE

BY HARRIETTE COLE

Do you ever notice a change in your body because you are losing weight or eating healthier? Have you ever been told by your doctor that you need to lose weight or eat healthier? You are probably thinking about your lifestyle change in order for you to stay healthy — or even alive. Yes, this may seem daunting, but it is true. High blood pressure is called “the silent killer” because it commonly has minimal side effects, yet it can and has caused strokes in thousands of unknowing victims. Doctors do suggest that exercise, healthy eating and weight loss can significantly reduce or even eliminate high blood pressure — in some people. Even if high blood pressure doesn’t go away, those things are good for you.

Will it be hard to add an exercise regimen into an already busy schedule? — Relaxing the Pressure, Brooklyn, New York

DEAR RELEASING THE PRESSURE: Health challenges such as yours present the requirement of a lifestyle change in order for you to stay healthy — or even alive. Yes, this may seem daunting, but it is true. High blood pressure is called “the silent killer” because it commonly has minimal side effects, yet it can and has caused strokes in thousands of unknowing victims. Doctors do suggest that exercise, healthy eating and weight loss can significantly reduce or even eliminate high blood pressure — in some people. Even if high blood pressure doesn’t go away, those things are good for you.

Will it be hard to add an exercise regimen into a tight schedule that did not previously include physical activity? Sure. You have to decide that your life is worth it. Once you do, get support by joining a walking group, a gym, Weight Watchers or some other group activity that will keep you honest about your developing routine. Reduce your sodium intake, cut out fatty foods and put the alcohol, shy away from sugary foods and put the stress on stress. Easier said than done, I know, but if you put yourself first, you create a chance to live the life you envisioned for yourself. You can do it!

DEAR HARRIETTE: My boyfriend called me to tell me about his long-distance “girlfriend” — I say that loosely because he has never seen her only once. He told his phone friend that he is seeing someone in the same city he lives in, and

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Solution to Crossword puzzle printed on page 3.

Solution to Sudoku puzzle printed on page 3.
Heart-healthy diet is also good for your bones

BY ANTHONY L. KOMAROFF, M.D.

DEAR DOCTOR K:

I am at increased risk for osteoporosis. Are there any foods or drinks I should avoid?

DEAR READER:

Osteoporosis is a bone-weakening condition that increases your risk of fractures. Though your bones may seem unchanging, they are continuously being broken down and rebuilt. (I’ve included an illustration of this process.) Osteoporosis occurs when more bone is broken down than is rebuilt. Osteoporosis is most common in postmenopausal women, but other people are also at risk. These include people with thyroid problems or eating disorders, and those who have used oral corticosteroid medications on a long-term basis. Some foods you eat can make you more likely to get osteoporosis. On the other hand, some foods can reduce your risk.

There is evidence that several common food substances, taken in large amounts, may be harmful to bone health. I wouldn’t call the evidence airtight, but it is strong enough that I’d advise anyone at risk for osteoporosis to limit their intake of these substances:

- CAFFEINE. Drinking four or more cups of coffee a day can increase your risk of breaking a bone. The evidence is pretty strong. So, you may want to stop that fourth cup.

- PROTEIN. High levels of protein, particularly protein from animal sources, may cause bones to lose calcium. This issue is still being investigated, and there is no consensus on how much, if any, protein may be harmful to bones. For now, I wouldn’t worry about protein harming your bones. Of course, as we’ve said here many times, the saturated fats that come with animal protein are not heart-healthy, so they should be eaten sparingly.

- ALCOHOL. People who consume more than two drinks per day may be at moderately higher risk of low bone density and fractures, compared with nondrinkers. On the other hand, some studies have found that moderate drinkers — men who have one or two drinks per day, and women who have one drink per day — have greater bone mass.

- VITAMIN A. Several studies have found a link between high vitamin A intake and fractures. Try not to exceed the current recommended daily amount of vitamin A, which is 700 micrograms (mcg) for women and 900 mcg for men.

As for the foods that help build bone, there are several:

- CALCIUM is the primary building block of bone. It is found in dairy products, spinach, dried beans, nuts, and fortified juices and cereals.

- VITAMIN D helps raise calcium levels in the blood and helps calcium get into bone. Vitamin D is found in eggs, certain fish and liver. Many people also benefit from taking a vitamin D supplement.

- VITAMIN K helps build diet, and (like vitamin D) also helps calcium get into bone. It is found in spinach, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, scallops, asparagus, cabbage and certain herbs.

Fortunately, a diet that protects bone health also tends to be healthy for the heart.

(Dr. Komaroff is a physician and professor at Harvard Medical School. To send questions, go to AskDoctorK.com, or write: Ask Doctor K, 10 Shattuck St., Second Floor, Boston, MA 02115.)