



Health Hints



People With Diabetes Urged To Keep Their Blood Pressure In Check

(NAPS)—If you are one of the 15 million Americans with diabetes, make sure that you monitor your blood pressure as closely as you watch your blood sugar. This advice comes from the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), which recently urged physicians to treat diabetics with high blood pressure more aggressively. If left untreated, hypertension can lead to heart attacks, strokes and kidney failure, which kills approximately 58,000 people each year.

The recommendations suggest that blood pressure in people with diabetes be no higher than 130/80—a level lower than the previous standard of 130/85, recommended by the federal government in 1997. The majority of patients will need a combination of two or more medications to reach this new goal.

Physicians usually treat mild to moderate high blood pressure by urging patients to stop smoking, exercise and/or change their diets. However, because of the additional stresses placed on the body by diabetes, the federal government recommends that high



blood pressure in diabetics be treated with both drug and non-drug therapy.

The NKF suggests that physicians start patients on an ACE inhibitor—a common type of medication that prevents blood vessels from constricting so that blood flows more easily. However, since recent research indicates that most patients will need more than one drug to treat their high blood pressure, the NKF recommends that physicians prescribe agents such as diuretics (water pills) or calcium channel blockers (CCBs), another drug that prevents the arteries from contracting, along with the ACE inhibitor.

Once blood pressure is con-

trolled, the NKF recommends that patients switch to a single pill formulation of an ACE inhibitor/CCB or ACE inhibitor/diuretic to contain costs and reduce the amount of medication patients must take each day.

Managing high blood pressure and diabetes requires a lifelong partnership between doctor and patient—both must work together to determine the best course of treatment. Although this may vary from patient to patient, it is clear that prompt and aggressive treatment of both conditions is essential.

The National Kidney Foundation is a major voluntary health organization, seeking to prevent kidney and urinary tract diseases, improve the health and well-being of individuals and families affected by these diseases, and increase the availability of all organs for transplantation.

To learn more about diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney disease, please contact the NKF at 800-622-9010 or visit their Web site at www.kidney.org.