



HOAG FOR LIFE

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INNOVATIVE AND COMPASSIONATE HEALTH CARE

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COMMUNITY EDUCATION CLASSES



A member of the
St. Joseph Hoag Health alliance

Ask the Doctor

Richard S. Blankenbaker, M.D.



Q: What is an optimal blood pressure reading?

A: Treatment of high blood pressure is a very important factor in maintaining your health. Optimal control of your blood pressure will reduce your change of having a stroke or heart attack or developing congestive heart failure or kidney disease. The Joint National Committee on Hypertension released a set of guidelines for treatment of high blood pressure in 2014; the committee made the following recommendations regarding blood pressure goals:

- Age \geq 60: Blood Pressure Goal < 150/90
- Age<60: Blood Pressure Goal < 140/90

For patients with Diabetes or Kidney Disease the recommendations are as follows:

- Diabetes (any age) < 140/90
- Kidney disease (any age) < 140/90

Based on this new information, many physicians are recommending more aggressive treatment of high blood pressure than recommended by the national guidelines. These recommendations are general guidelines and may not apply to every patient. I would encourage patients to discuss treatment goals with their physician and determine on an individual basis what their “optimal” blood pressure measurements should be.

► To read more, visit hoag.org/ask-dr1.

Nancy Councelbaum, M.D.



Q: What advice for healthy living can you provide to senior patients?

A: The song, “Don’t Worry Be Happy,” often makes people smile. Does this simple phrase provide benefit for healthy aging?

Negative effects of worry and stress can include sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression, weight changes, hypertension, and poor concentration. Happiness may not be so easy to define but is generally felt to be a sense of well-being.

In my experience with patients, I have found that living well – at any age – may be more important than living long. Fear of living with memory loss or other disability, such as a stroke, are concerns raised by many individuals. This can certainly affect well-being and happiness. I encourage people to find things that they enjoy and participate in new activities. You are never too old to learn something new.

Nutrition is also an important part of healthy aging. Think of food as medicine. Following a Mediterranean-type diet is a good choice and good medicine. Making changes towards a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle does not have to be complicated.

► To read more, visit hoag.org/ask-dr2.

Paul J. Korc, M.D.



Q: Who is at risk for pancreatic cancer?

A: A risk factor is something that increases the chance of developing a disease. Some risk factors can be modified (lifestyle) while some cannot

(such as age and family history). Risk factors for pancreatic cancer include:

- Lifestyle-related factors, such as smoking, alcohol use and a high-fat diet
- Being overweight or obese
- Diabetes
- Chronic inflammation of the pancreas (chronic pancreatitis)
- Certain types of pancreatic cysts
- Family history of pancreatic cancer
- Family history of certain cancer syndromes
- Being African-American

If you are concerned about your risk for pancreatic cancer it is important to seek proper evaluation and treatment from a health care expert experienced in the diagnosis and treatment of gastrointestinal issues.

► To read more, visit hoag.org/ask-dr3.

Samir Shah, M.D.



Q: Can cataract surgery be performed by laser?

A: Cataract surgery is one of the most common surgeries in the United States, and can be performed both traditionally

(by hand) and by laser. Laser cataract surgery has been shown to significantly improve accuracy and precision of corneal incisions and the capsulotomy. Laser cataract surgery is gentler on the eye because less energy is required to remove the cataract compared to traditional cataract surgery. This can help reduce post-operative recovery time.

During cataract surgery, the natural lens of the eye is removed and an artificial lens or an intraocular lens (IOL) is placed in the eye to restore vision. Surgery takes less than half an hour and is usually performed in an outpatient setting.

In a traditional surgery, these steps are performed manually with blades and needles by the surgeon. However, in laser cataract surgery, a highly-accurate, computerized laser assists the surgeon in performing some of the critical steps of the procedure.

► To read more, visit hoag.org/ask-dr4.