

Retired from Teaching But Not from Learning about Her Health

Some people with high blood pressure ignore the problem or think it can't hurt them.

Not Marge Prioleau.

"High blood pressure can lead to stroke and having problems with the heart. There are so many things that can come from high blood pressure."

Prioleau is a retired school teacher who lives in Beaufort, South Carolina. She found out that she had high blood pressure about 14 years ago.

"I started to feel dizzy and went to the school's nurse. She took my blood pressure and said it was high."

Following health advice is easier said than done, but somehow Prioleau manages to do it. She keeps her blood pressure under control by getting exercise, eating healthy foods, and taking blood pressure medications.

Her main exercise is walking around a quarter-mile running track at a nearby school. She gets up early to beat the heat, which in South Carolina can sap even the most determined person's willpower to exercise. She does 16 to 20 laps, which equals four to five miles.

She makes sure her shoes are comfortable. Unlike many people who run and walk for their health, she doesn't wear a Walkman.

"I like to take time to take an inventory of myself," says Prioleau. "It gives me time to think."

She has banned fried food from her diet except for fish and a special treat of fried chicken on New Year's. She makes juice from carrots and apples and drinks a lot of water.

And does Prioleau eat grits, the porridge-like dish made from corn that Southerners crave? "Of course," she says laughing, "but I don't eat them with salt."

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High Blood Pressure: The Science Inside

Like many people with high blood pressure, Prioleau can't keep it under control with diet alone. She was originally prescribed Lotrel, a calcium-channel blocker, but her blood pressure started going up again. Now she takes Norvasc, a calcium-channel blocker; Cozaar, an angiotensin II receptor blocker; and a diuretic.

Prioleau says her doctor, Dr. William Bestermann, deserves part of the credit for her outlook. "On a scale of 1 to 10, I would say Dr. Besterman is a 10. He promotes a healthy way of life."

Many of us take our health for granted. We just go along assuming we'll stay well or that doctors will be able to treat us if anything goes wrong. Prioleau sees her health as something she has to work for.

"I am the sort of person who if there is something that is going to help me have a better way of life, then I am going to try to do it."