

CrossRoads Parish Nurse News  
Lyn Polk and Cherrie Fleming  
10/01/2025

Years ago, in different states, Cherrie Fleming and Lyn Polk each decided to seek additional education to be able to utilize their nursing skills in a church setting. Both of them are certified Parish Nurses.

They will be sharing health information with you as appropriate.

**First topic: New blood pressure guidance**

We are sharing some new information, but you should always consult with your own physician before “jumping on a new bandwagon.”

In the first major update since 2017, the American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology are urging doctors to act sooner, treating even minor elevations in blood pressure as threats to both heart and brain health. High blood pressure silently scars the brain's white matter which can be seen on MRI scans decades before memory loss is noted. Also, high blood pressure sends force into the brain's smallest arteries, causing them to thicken, break, or leak since they aren't designed for such high pressures. This results in silent strokes—real brain damage but not seen at the time.

A Johns Hopkins study of more than 13,000 adults found that having high blood pressure in midlife was linked to faster cognitive decline over the next two decades. Those who controlled their pressures experienced less decline as they aged. So the new guidance to treat blood pressure early is about preserving memory and independence later in life,

The cutoffs for high blood pressure have not changed: Below 120/80 is normal. 130-139 over 80-89 is Stage 1 hypertension, and 140/90 or higher is stage 2. *Nearly half of all US adults already meet the Stage 1 definition.* The message now is to act sooner since even modest elevations can quietly damage your heart or your brain.

We can all make lifestyle changes that may bring our pressures down without another pill. Manage weight. Eat more plants, cut back on salt, stay active, sleep well, ease stress, and limit alcohol. More home cooking without the processed foods really cuts back on sodium intake, for example, and can drop pressure five points. Regular activity can lower systolic pressure by five to seven points.

Cherrie and Lyn will be available on the first Sunday every month to take your blood pressure over in the Welcome area. Maybe with some focus, some of us can drop a couple points off our B/P by the New Year!