

HEALTH MATTERS

For Your Health



BY LARRY LUCAS

Preventing Kidney Disease

Take some time out to honor your body by taking steps to manage and prevent chronic conditions that could lead to more serious illnesses such as kidney disease.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, one in nine Americans has kidney disease, a condition that damages your kidneys and keeps them from performing normal functions.

Kidney disease and several chronic conditions are interrelated: for example, high blood pressure and diabetes can lead to kidney disease and complicate it further.

With 3.7 million African Americans aged 20 years or older living with diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention, we must be more aware of the dangers of this condition. Even one of my favorite basketball stars, Alonzo Mourning of the Miami Heat, wasn't aware he had kidney disease until he became very ill.

Alonzo had to quit the NBA to receive a life-saving kidney transplant. After receiving the proper treatment, he is living a healthy life today and educating others on the dangers of this disease.

Kidney disease often progresses so slowly that many of those who have it, like Alonzo, are unaware of it until the condition is in its ad-

vanced stages. However, there are several minor symptoms people with kidney disease might notice before they are diagnosed. They may feel tired, have trouble sleeping or have to urinate more often than others, particularly at night. They may also notice swollen feet or ankles and muscle cramping at night.

Kidney disease can happen any age, making it vital for children, teens and adults to take care of themselves and fight against risk factors.

With kidney disease being the ninth leading cause of death in the U.S., according to the CDC, everyone should take the time to look at the risk factors and see where they stand.

Thankfully, there are several steps you can take to prevent kid-

ney disease. And, many of these steps help you fight off related conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes, which is all the more reason to take action!

Get plenty of regular exercise to maintain a healthy weight and avoid alcohol and cigarettes. Also, be sure to get your blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked regularly and follow-up with your doctor if any of these levels are high since you may need additional tests.

Finally, be sure to take any blood pressure or diabetes medication your doctor prescribes for you.

Blood pressure and diabetes medication can be a life saver for those who need it to prevent kidney disease and related conditions, but

medicine such as this means nothing if those who need it most can't afford it.

Patients who need help accessing prescriptions can turn to the Partnership for Prescription Assistance, which has connected 6 million patients in need to programs that provide free or nearly free medicines.

For more information, patients can call 1-888-4PPA-NOW or visit pparx.org.

Be a leader in your family and community by keeping yourself healthy and spreading the word for others to do the same.

Larry Lucas is a vice president for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

Optometry School Reaches Out

Pacific University's College of Optometry is inviting college undergraduates to apply for a three-day program designed to introduce the optometry profession to ethnic groups underrepresented in the practice.

Attendees will receive a comprehensive view of the field on its Forest Grove campus, during a three day residence experience July 7-9, to see if it is something they wish to pursue as a career.

Admitted students will receive participation materials and on-campus room and board free of charge. "Optometrists are healthcare providers who do

much more than prescribe materials for improved vision," college dead Jennifer Smythe said. "They diagnose and manage eye disease, perform minor surgical procedures, and are often the care provider that discovers a patient's health issue first.

Those wishing to attend the program must have a demonstrated interest in the health professions, have a cumulative grade point average above 2.75, and identify as part of a minority group that is underrepresented in the optometry profession.

Application requirements and materials may be obtained at pacificu.edu/optometry.

Healthy Hearts Start Young

You are never too young to think about your heart.

Nearly 33 percent of children in the U.S. are overweight. Of those, 17 percent are considered obese, a heart disease risk.

Heart disease can begin developing during childhood, so now is the time to teach your children heart-healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

Some tips from experts at Providence Health and Services include, having the entire family help with menu planning, food shopping and meal preparation; limiting television and video games to one hour each day; and making exercise a family affair.

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