ENCOURAGE LIFETIME LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS

Lifestyle modifications that have been shown to effectively lower BP include:

- Weight loss;
- Smoking cessation;
- Reduced sodium intake;
- Increased physical activity;
- Limited alcohol consumption; and
- The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet.

You don’t have to overwhelm the patient with starting them all at once. Use motivational interviewing to help the patient identify which change would bring the most “bang for the buck” in his/her life. Some starting points:

- **3500 calories = 1 pound**, so keeping a food diary and cutting back 500 calories per day will help your patient lose 1 – 2 pounds per week (paper and pen work fine, but many patients like smartphone tools like MyFitnessPal).

- Teach patients how to **read food labels** so they can find the sodium. Go to: [http://www.fda.gov/food/ingredientspackaginglabeling/labelingnutrition/ucm274593.htm](http://www.fda.gov/food/ingredientspackaginglabeling/labelingnutrition/ucm274593.htm)

- **10,000 steps = 5 miles**. Pedometers are low-cost and pretty effective at tracking activity. Have the patient start tracking on a usual day, then increase by 10 to 20 percent each week. **Couch to 5k** is another popular app amongst patients.

- **The DASH diet** is only helpful if you share what’s in it! Print the *Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure*, which includes the DASH diet, and give this resource to patients. Go to: [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/hbp_low.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/hbp_low.pdf)

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