# Lil' Gifts and Inspiring Thoughts May Help Hypertension Patients Stick With Treatment

February 2, 2012

Unexpected presents along with plenty of positivity can work wonders, even for those living with high blood pressure. When hypertension patients received health education as well as small doses of positive reinforcement during their everyday routines, they were more likely to adhere to their prescribed treatment meds, according to a new study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine and reported by MedlinePlus.

For the study, researchers from New York University School of Medicine followed a group of 256 black patients with hypertension for one year to see if educational materials and positive reinforcement could help them correctly take their meds. Investigators focused on black patients because hypertension disproportionately affects African Americans compared with white Americans, and because poor treatment adherence can lead to poor blood pressure control, which, in turn, can lead to cardiovascular problems and death.

To check the effect of positive reinforcement, researchers separated study participants into two groups. Each group received educational materials about hypertension through a self-management workbook; participants signed a behavioral contract to commit to their medical regimen; and they received two phone calls from the researchers per month. Patients in one group received no positive reinforcement, while those in the other group were given small, unexpected gifts, encouraging comments during phone calls and a workbook chapter about using positive moments to stick with a medical treatment plan. Then scientists charted how well patients from both groups stuck to their treatment.

The results? Findings showed that, after one year, the positive reinforcement plus education group had significantly higher treatment adherence levels compared with the education-only group—42 percent adherence compared with 36 percent adherence.

But even though researchers gave two thumbs up to using positive reinforcement tools to help hypertension patients adhere to their meds, scientists said they still have to evaluate whether it would be cost-effective to include these tactics in high blood pressure treatment regimens.

Medication and lifestyle changes might help prevent high blood pressure risk among African Americans. Click here to read more.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/hypertensionTreatment-positive-reinforcement-21854-3030