USF Health’s Les Miller, M.D., shown at the fitness center at Laurel Manor Recreation Center, said a consistent aerobic exercise program is one of the key preventive steps residents can take to lower cardiovascular health risks.

MEDICINE, from C1

helping to provide enhanced health care treatment and prevention to individual patients. Genomics screening will be a part of the process, providing USF Health experts with valuable input.

“It’s going to change the face of cardiovascular medicine,” said Miller, who is cardiovascular sciences chairman at the University of South Florida College of Medicine.

But even before the study produces results, USF Health is prepared to share information with the community on what it already knows. And that includes some reminders on basic cardiovascular care.

Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer in the United States. Miller said blood pressure screening is a good tool to help reduce the risk of cardiovascular problems, because it’s known that constant, elevated blood pressure is a contributor to increasing a person’s risk. High blood pressure has adverse risks to the heart, kidney and entire cardiovascular system, Miller said.

“The biggest side-effect or risk is stroke,” Miller said.

All those risks can be minimized with a blood pressure that is held in check with periodic testing.

“Get a good annual exam from your doctor here in The Villages,” Miller added.

And if your local doctor has put you on high-blood pressure medication, Miller urges you to take it.

“There’s a lot of adverse effects if it’s not followed,” he said of a patient’s treatment plan.

The value of a good diet cannot be underestimated, Miller said.

Salt is a big detriment in one’s diet and can trigger greater cardiovascular disease risk with heavy or consistent use, he said.

“Look at the impact of (salt). We think the whole country could use less salt,” Miller said. “In my area (cardiovascular), I just say ‘no added salt.’ There are a lot of good salt substitutes with no salt, and they give a lot of good flavor.”

Miller has heard others sing the praises of “sea salt,” but calls it the latest “craze” and said there’s no solid documentation that it’s better.

Miller cautions people from a diet that is filled with lots of processed foods and canned soup — generally high in salt content.

“It’s really important to eat as much raw vegetables and nonprocessed foods as possible,” Miller said. “Focus more on lean meat, more turkey, chicken and particularly fish.”

Reading nutrition labels is a key tip for picking the right food. Miller said the aim is to avoid foods with high fat content. Low cholesterol is vital for people.

“Cholesterol goes right into the walls of the arteries,” Miller said.

And when it comes to consuming alcoholic beverages, Miller said in general terms, moderation is the most prudent approach.

Miller said wine has the most positive image, but thinks wine’s proclaimed benefits “is going in excess.”

He said alcoholic beverages of all types can increase blood pressure and alcohol is a direct toxin to the body.

Watching your weight is a solid step you can take to reduce your risk for cardiovascular disease, Miller said.

“Clearly, the overall benefit of exercise always reduces blood pressure,” Miller said.

“Many people may not need a blood pressure medication if they continue to exercise, and particularly aerobic exercise.”

Walking or using a treadmill are simple examples of good aerobic exercise, and are better than weightlifting activities, he said.

“Resistance training is not as good as just plain aerobic exercise for the cardiovascular benefit,” Miller said.

Aerobic exercise is a benefit because it increases a person’s blood flow throughout the body, he said.

Attention to “mind-body-heart” and relaxation techniques are becoming the latest weapon against cardiovascular disease as more is learned about it, Miller said.

“If you engage in relaxation, you can help lower blood pressure, you can lower your heart rate,” he said.

Some studies have even found that if couples hold hands, the patient’s blood pressure can drop with the tender touch of their mate, he said.

Additional studies are focusing more attention on yoga and relaxation techniques.

“It’s something hard to quantify, but we know that any time you’re stressed, the body’s adrenaline goes up, and the heart rate is the major target of that,” Miller said. “Work hard, play hard, but also learn to relax along the way.”

Curt Hills is an assistant managing editor with the Daily Sun. He can be reached at 753-1119, ext. 9319, or curt.hills@thevillagesmedia.com.
Making personalized medicine happen

Villages-USF Health partnership strives to boost individual care

By CURT HILLS
DAILY SUN

THE VILLAGES – In the future, when the value of an upcoming large-scale survey of retirees in The Villages produces valuable feedback, medical advice will be more finely tuned — right down to the individual patient.

That’s the feature of personalized medicine for which University of South Florida Health’s Dr. Les Miller is a leading advocate. The Villages-USF Health partnership recently created will go a long way toward making personalized medicine happen, Miller believes.

It will involve an extensive survey of participating residents that will generate a wealth of information, which over time, can be studied to glean valuable information in

See MEDICINE, C3

KEY TIPS FOR MINIMIZING RISK

1. Keep an eye on your blood pressure
2. Scrutinize your diet choices
3. Monitor your body weight
4. Exercise
5. Don’t forget to relax
6. Alcohol in moderation

Source: Dr. Les Miller, USF cardiovascular sciences chairman