

THE IMPACT OF HYPERTENSION

Normal Blood Pressure is Below 120/80 mm Hg

The prevalence of hypertension in African-Americans in the U.S. is among the highest in the world

High blood pressure, or hypertension, usually has no symptoms and is known as the “silent killer.” There is a higher rate of high blood pressure among African-Americans, who also develop the disease earlier in life. Researchers have found that there may be a gene that makes African-Americans more salt-sensitive, making them more prone to develop hypertension. Learn more below about prevention, symptoms and treatment of high blood pressure.

01 | Cause

Blood pressure is the pressure of the blood against the walls of the arteries. The more blood your heart pumps and the narrower your arteries, the higher your blood pressure will be. Even without symptoms, damage to blood vessels and the heart occurs and can increase the risk for serious health problems, including heart attack and stroke. For most adults, there is no identifiable cause of high blood pressure – this is known as primary (essential) hypertension and tends to develop gradually over many years. In secondary hypertension, high blood pressure is caused by an underlying condition and appears suddenly. It can be caused by:

- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Kidney problems
- Adrenal gland tumors
- Thyroid problems
- Congenital defects of the blood vessels
- Certain medications & illegal drugs

02 | Symptoms

Most people with hypertension have no symptoms, even if blood pressure reaches dangerously high levels. Some, though, may exhibit symptoms such as headaches, shortness of breath or nosebleeds, but these aren't specific to hypertension and usually don't occur until blood pressure has reached an extremely severe stage.

03 | Diagnosis and Treatment

To measure blood pressure, an inflatable arm cuff is placed around the arm and a reading is given in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg). The upper number measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats (systolic pressure). The lower number measures

the pressure of the arteries between beats (diastolic pressure).

The two stages of hypertension are:

- **Stage 1** – a systolic pressure ranging from 130-139 mm Hg or a diastolic pressure ranging from 80-89 mm Hg
- **Stage 2** – a systolic pressure of 140 mm Hg or higher or a diastolic pressure of 90 mm Hg or higher

Lifestyle changes are a major factor in controlling high blood pressure. Reducing salt intake, regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight may be enough to control hypertension. In more severe cases, however, there are several different types of medication that may be prescribed to control high blood pressure.

For more information on hypertension's impact on African-Americans, please

visit: <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/why-high-blood-pressure-is-a-silent-killer/high-blood-pressure-and-african-americans>

Did You Know?

More than 40% of African-Americans have high blood pressure

References

https://www.heart.org/-/media/data-import/downloadables/pe-abh-what-about-african-americans-and-high-blood-pressure-ucm_300463.pdf?la=en&hash=95E93A0B6B484F665782A17CA1FFD148EDEEAFB7

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20373417>