

Understanding High Blood Pressure - CDC Summary

What is High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is when the force of blood flowing through your blood vessels is consistently too high. It increases the risk for heart disease and stroke, two of the leading causes of death in the United States. Often called the 'silent killer,' it typically has no warning signs or symptoms, making regular monitoring critical.

Risk Factors

Risk factors include obesity, lack of physical activity, tobacco use, too much alcohol, stress, and a diet high in sodium. Non-modifiable risk factors include age, genetics, and being African American, which is associated with higher rates and earlier onset of hypertension.

High Blood Pressure in African Americans

African Americans develop high blood pressure more often and earlier in life than other racial groups. They are also more likely to suffer from related complications like stroke, heart disease, and kidney failure. Socioeconomic factors, access to care, and structural disparities contribute significantly to these outcomes.

Prevention and Management

Lifestyle changes are essential in managing blood pressure: eat a balanced diet, reduce salt intake, be physically active, maintain a healthy weight, limit alcohol, and avoid tobacco. In some cases, medication may be needed. Monitoring blood pressure at home and routine healthcare visits are vital.

CDC Resources

The CDC offers educational tools, statistics, and prevention guides to help individuals manage their blood pressure. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure> for more information.

High Blood Pressure and African Americans – Insights from the American Heart Association

Understanding High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, occurs when the force of blood against the artery walls is consistently too high. Over time, uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to serious health complications such as heart disease, stroke, kidney damage, and vision loss.

AHA's Perspective on African Americans and Hypertension

According to the American Heart Association, African Americans are disproportionately affected by high blood pressure. Nearly 55% of Black adults in the U.S. have hypertension, among the highest rates in the world. Not only do African Americans develop high blood pressure more often, but it also tends to occur earlier in life and is often more severe.

Why the Disparity?

The reasons for this disparity are complex and multifaceted. They include a combination of genetic predispositions, limited access to healthcare, higher exposure to chronic stress, socioeconomic challenges, and cultural dietary patterns that may be high in sodium and saturated fats. Historical inequities in healthcare delivery and persistent racism also contribute to increased risk.

AHA Recommendations

The American Heart Association recommends that African Americans take proactive steps to monitor and manage their blood pressure:

- Know your numbers: Check your blood pressure regularly.
- Reduce sodium intake: Aim for less than 1,500 mg per day.
- Maintain a healthy weight and engage in regular physical activity.
- Avoid tobacco products and limit alcohol consumption.
- Manage stress through mindfulness, prayer, or therapy.
- Partner with a healthcare provider to create a plan that works for you.

Final Word

Hypertension doesn't have to define your future. With education, lifestyle changes, and community support, individuals—especially in African American communities—can take control of their heart health and live longer, stronger lives.