

Men's Health Network

P. O. Box 770 : Washington, D.C. 20044-0770

202-543-MHN-1 (6461) : Mensnet@capaccess.org

www.menshealthnetwork.org

High Blood Pressure and Stroke: Men

Talking points

Resources:

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P.O. Box 770
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American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)
www.healthanswers.com/health_answers/aafp/index.htm

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
National Institutes of Health.
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/nhlbi/cardio/cardio.htm>

American Heart Association
www.amhrt.org

Hypertension Network, Inc.
<http://www.bloodpressure.com/>

Framingham Heart Study as published in Lancet and reported by Reuters.

General information:

High blood pressure damages your heart vessels, raising the risk of stroke, kidney failure, heart disease, and heart attack.¹

Heart disease is the number one killer in the U.S. and stroke is number three.²

One in four American adults has high blood pressure.³

High blood pressure affects more than 50 million people in the United States and is responsible for about 700,000 deaths a year.⁴

¹ American Academy of Family Physicians, 10-23-97. <http://housecall.orbisnws.com> and American Heart Association, 9-11-98. www.amhrt.org

² National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 9-18-98. www.nhlbi.nih.gov

³ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 9-18-98. www.nhlbi.nih.gov

⁴ Information Central, Valley View Hospital, 9-11-98. www.vvh.org

Consistently high blood pressure can lead to serious medical problems like:⁵

- Arteriosclerosis (“hardening of the arteries”). High blood pressure harms the arteries by making them thick and stiff. This speeds up the development of cholesterol and fats in the blood vessels.
- Heart attack. From reduced blood flow.
- Enlarged heart. High blood pressure causes the heart to work harder, which, over time, causes the heart to thicken and stretch.
- Kidney damage. Over a number of years, high blood pressure can narrow and thicken the blood vessels of the kidney, restricting the ability of the kidney to filter fluid, which, in turn, causes waste build-up in the blood.
- Stroke. High blood pressure can harm the arteries. This may cause them to narrow faster, leaving them at greater risk for blockage, causing a thrombotic stroke. A weakened blood vessel may break in the brain, causing a hemorrhagic stroke.

Your blood pressure is greatest when the heart contracts and is pumping blood. This is called systolic pressure and is the upper number in a blood pressure reading. When the heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is the diastolic pressure and is the lower number in a blood pressure reading. So, blood pressure readings are expressed as: systolic / diastolic⁶

Blood pressure less than 140/90 is considered normal. However, a blood pressure below 120/80 is better for your heart and arteries.⁷

A normal blood pressure is less than 130/85. High blood pressure is when your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher.⁸

“An example of a normal, healthy blood pressure reading would be 120/80.... Everyone should have their blood pressure checked at least every two years, more often if you are in a high risk group.” The high risk group also includes men over 40 and women over 50.⁹

“Most doctors now believe that 140/90 is too high. Recent studies have shown that persons whose diastolic pressures are kept below 85 do much better over the long run. ... I view 130/80 as the optimal target at virtually any age.”¹⁰

⁵ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 9-18-98. www.nhlbi.nih.gov

⁶ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 9-18-98. www.nhlbi.nih.gov

⁷ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 9-18-98. www.nhlbi.nih.gov

⁸ American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation Health Education Program, 9-11-98.
www.healthanswers.com

⁹ Spence, Dr. Kim. Information Central, Valley View Hospital, 9-11-98. www.vvh.org

¹⁰ Rosenfeld, Dr. Isadore. “Don’t Be Blaise About Your Blood Pressure.” Parade Magazine, 9-13-98.

Data on males and race:

High blood pressure develops earlier and is more severe in African Americans than in whites.¹¹

Men have high blood pressure more often than women in the early and middle years, but after menopause, women are more likely to have high blood pressure than men. More than one-half of Americans over age 65 have high blood pressure.¹²

Heart attack risk from the Framingham Heart Study, an ongoing study of citizens in a suburb of Boston.¹³

- "... the average 40-year-old white man in the United States has a one-in-two risk of developing heart disease over the rest of his life, while a woman has a one-in-three risk."
- Daniel Levy of the Boston University School of Medicine, who led the study, said the numbers can help public health officials plan for the future.
- "The fact that the average 50-year-old woman is three times more likely to develop some form of heart disease than breast cancer has important implications for public health," Daniel Levy of the Boston University School of Medicine, leader of the Framingham Heart Study.
- After the age of 40 the men had a one-in-two risk and the women in the study had a one-in-three risk.
- This risk fell to one-in-three for men by the time they reached 70 and one-in-four for women who made it to 70 without getting heart disease.

High blood pressure (HBP) facts from the American Heart Association:¹⁴

- Men are at greater risk than women until age 55.
- The 1995 death rate from HBP for black males was 356% higher than that for white males (6.8 v. 31.0 per 100,000).
- In ages 20-34, men are 253% more likely to have HBP than are women (8.6 v. 3.4 per 100,000); in ages 35-44, men are 165% more likely to have HBP than are women (20.9 v.

¹¹ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 9-18-98. www.nhlbi.nih.gov

¹² National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 9-18-98. www.nhlbi.nih.gov

¹³ Lancet as reported by Reuters News Service January 8, 1999. Information from the Framingham Heart Study, an ongoing study of citizens in a suburb of Boston.

¹⁴ American Heart Association, 9-11-98. www.amhrt.org

12.7 per 100,000); in ages 45-54 men are 136% more likely to have HBP than are women (34.1 v. 25.1 per 100,000).

- Blacks and whites in the Southeastern U.S. have a greater prevalence of HBP and higher death rates from stroke than those from other regions of the country.
- In 1995 the death rate from HBP for black males was 355% higher than for white males. (And 352% higher for black females than for white females.)
- 71% of non-Hispanic blacks ages 60 and older have HBP.
- Blacks develop HBP at an earlier age and, at any decade of life, hypertension is more severe in blacks than in whites, resulting in higher rates of nonfatal stroke, fatal stroke, death from heart disease, and end-stage renal disease.

The prevalence of HBP in adults age 20 and older is 24.4% for non-Hispanic white males, 35.0% for non-Hispanic black males, and 25.2% for Mexican-American Males.¹⁵

16.8% of Mexican-American males, 22.8% of Cuban-American males, and 15.6% of Puerto Rican males have HBP.¹⁶

9.7% of Asian-American males have HBP.¹⁷

73% of Japanese-American men aged 71-93 have HBP.¹⁸

10.3% of American Indian / Alaska Native men have HBP.¹⁹

Stroke Facts:

Stroke continues to be a pressing health problem:²⁰

- Approximately 550,000 people have a new or recurrent stroke each year and there are nearly 4 million stroke survivors in the U.S.
- The 1995 estimated cost of stroke-related health care is a staggering 20 to 40 billion dollars measured in both health-care dollars and lost productivity. (American Heart Association, Heart and Stroke Facts 1994 Statistical Supplement)

¹⁵ National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey II, 1988-94. Found in American Heart Association, 9-11-98. www.amhrt.org

¹⁶ Hispanic Health and Nutrition Survey. Found in American Heart Association, 9-11-98. www.amhrt.org

¹⁷ American Heart Association, 9-11-98. www.amhrt.org

¹⁸ Honolulu Heart Study. Found in American Heart Association, 9-11-98. www.amhrt.org

¹⁹ American Heart Association, 9-11-98. www.amhrt.org

²⁰ Sacco, Ralph MS, MD. "Identification of the Stroke-prone Individual." Stroke Prevention in the 90s, 50th Annual Meeting, American Academy of Neurology, April 25-May 2, 1998.

- The risk of stroke rises proportionately with increasing blood pressure.

Stroke and cardiovascular disease (CVD) facts from the American Heart Association:²¹

- The incidence of stroke is 19% higher for males than for females, and under age 65 the difference is greater.
- 2/3 of men who have a stroke die within 12 years. Long-term survivorship is poorer in men than in women.
- The 1995 death rates for stroke were 97% higher for black males than for white males (26.5 for white males and 52.2 for black males). (And 71% higher for black females than for white females.)
- African-American men and women are 2.5 times more likely to die of stroke than are whites.
- CVD is the leading cause of death for white, black, and Hispanic males.
- CVD killed over 455,000 males in 1995 while cancer killed more than 281,000.
- The 1995 death rate for CVD was 49% higher for black males than for white males (221.5 v. 330.9 per 100,000). (And 67% higher for black females than for white females.)
- Heart attack is the single biggest killer of American males.
- 48% of men who die suddenly of coronary heart disease had no previous evidence of the disease.

Children:

Children and High Blood Pressure facts from the Hypertension Network:²²

High blood pressure (hypertension) in children is uncommon but parents should be aware that it can occur. High blood pressure in children is often due to an identifiable cause. Below the age of ten, the three commonest types are kidney disease (including narrowing of a renal artery), [coarctation of the aorta](#), and a variety of disorders of the adrenal glands.

- *Kidney disease.* One or both of the arteries supplying the kidneys (renal arteries) may be narrowed by a process called fibromuscular dysplasia, which consists of one or more

²¹ American Heart Association, 9-11-98. www.amhrt.org

²² Hypertension Network, Inc., 9-11-98. www.bloodpressure.com

fibrous bands which constrict the vessel, and restricts the blood flow to the kidney. The technical term for such a narrowing is renal artery stenosis. Relief of the narrowing by surgery or angioplasty (balloon dilation) can cure the hypertension.

- *Coarctation of the aorta.* The aorta is the large artery which leaves the heart and goes down to the abdomen. Coarctation means a narrowing. This is usually found just below the point where the two arteries going to the arms (subclavian arteries) come off. There is a pressure gradient across the narrowing, so the blood pressure in the arms is higher than in the legs. The hypertension can be cured by surgical removal of the narrowing.
- Disorders of the adrenal glands. The adrenal glands are small glands which sit on top of the kidneys. They make [hormones](#) that, when produced in excess, raise the blood pressure. This can happen either because of a tumor such as a [pheochromocytoma](#), which makes the hormones norepinephrine and [epinephrine](#) or because of an inborn error of metabolism.

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