

Your Health Reference Sheet

Topic: High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

By Carol Ritberger, PhD, Medical Intuitive

If you found yourself in a stressful situation that put your nerves on edge, such as going to the doctor, having medical tests, taking a final exam, or delivering a speech, or if you found yourself engaged in activities that demanded a lot of your body, such as jogging for a few miles or swimming many laps, there's a very good chance that you'd experience a high blood pressure reading. However, in these situations, there isn't any cause for alarm. It's actually natural for blood pressure to rise and fall with changes in your activities or in your emotional state. It's also normal for blood pressure readings to vary from person to person and even from one area of the body to another. However, you should become concerned about whether you have high blood pressure when those readings remain *consistently* high. Should this occur, then it's time to take the necessary steps to reduce your blood pressure or to control it. Why? Because without doing so, high blood pressure not only puts your heart at risk but also can damage your entire cardiovascular system.

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is the most common of all of the cardiovascular diseases in the industrialized world. It's the leading cause of stroke and a major contributor to heart attack. In the United States alone, about 73.6 million people, or one in every three adults who are age 20 and older have high blood pressure. And, while high blood pressure was once thought to be associated with the aging process, current research is showing that more young adults are now experiencing this condition. Why younger people? Evidence shows that it's due to the increase in obesity, Type 2 diabetes, drug use, alcohol abuse, and poor coping skills in dealing with stress.

Research is also showing that high blood pressure is no longer a "man's disease" and, in fact, women are as likely to suffer from it as men. Research statistics show that 30.3 percent of American women and 31.8 percent of American men have high blood pressure. The statistic for women significantly increases after menopause. Furthermore, women are at a higher risk for complications associated with high blood pressure because their medical practitioners often ignore or fail to detect the high blood pressure until it's too late.

High blood pressure is often called the "silent killer" for two reasons: 1) many people don't even realize they have it until something bad happens, such as a stroke; and, 2) left unchecked, it can insidiously and silently inflict serious damage on the body. Fortunately, high blood pressure can be controlled effectively. The first step, of course, is discovering that you have it, and one way to do this is to have your blood pressure checked regularly.

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