

# **High Blood Pressure in African Americans**

## **Background:**

- High blood pressure is a blood pressure reading of 140/90 mmHg or higher, and both numbers are important keys. (NHLBI)
- 120/80 mmHg is the normal blood pressure.
- High blood pressure is also called hypertension.
- There is prehypertension, which is when the reading is between 120/80 and 140/90.
- About 28% American adults have prehypertension. (CDC)
- Blood pressure measures the force of blood against the wall of your blood vessels that makes your blood pressure go higher. Narrowing or clogged vessels can also cause a rise in blood pressure. (NIDDK)
- There are usually no symptoms to high blood pressure that is why it is important to have your blood pressure checked when you go to the doctor. High blood pressure is known as the “silent killer”.
- High blood pressure could be a major cause of kidney failure, but can also cause other diseases, such as strokes, heart attack, and vision problems or even may lead to death.
- There is no clear answer of why but the risk of high blood pressure increases in African Americans.
- 35% of African Americans have hypertension, which accounts for 20% of the African American deaths in the United States; this is twice the percentage of deaths of white Americans with hypertension. (Net Wellness)
- Also, the age that African Americans develop high blood pressure is earlier than for any other race. (Net Wellness)

- African Americans also have as high as 80% or higher of a chance that they will have a stroke compared to the general population. (Net Wellness)
- More problems may also occur from poorly controlled hypertension especially after a person is aware of the problem.

### **Statement of the Problem**

- One main objective of Healthy People 2010 is to “increase the number of adults who are taking action to help control their blood pressure.” (Healthy People 2010)
- Other objectives are
  - Reduce proportion of adults with high blood pressure.
  - Have adults aware of their blood pressure.
  - Be knowledgeable of how to prevent and control the blood pressure.
  - Healthy peoples objective is to help control hypertension so that it won't lead to further severe diseases such as stroke and heart disease.
- High blood pressure during pregnancy is excluded in their counts.
- It is stated that 90% of middle-aged adults will develop high blood pressure in the remainder of their life.
- Get checked by your doctor at least once a year and try to maintain a normal level. (CDC)
- In health surveys, high blood pressure is only considered from people who have been told by their doctor two or more times that they had high blood pressure.

## **Epidemiological Picture**

- About 1 in 3 Americans have high blood pressure. 2 in 5 African Americans have high blood pressure and only about 1 in 6 Asian and 1 in 5 Native Americans and Hispanics have high blood pressure. (CDC)
- Obesity is a major risk factor, especially for black women.
- According to CDC, 49,707 Americans died from high blood pressure in 2002.
- High blood pressure is related to heart disease and stroke, which are the two leading causes of death. (CDC)
- 31.6% of people with hypertension don't even know they have it. (CDC)
- Statistics show that it affects African American women more than other women of other ethnicities. African American males come in second as most affected by hypertension. (CDC)
- Poor and near poor people make up the highest percentage of people affected by high blood pressure, which accounts for 67.4%. (CDC)
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## **Solutions**

**Net Wellness**      <http://www.netwellness.org>

Net Wellness seeks to provide the highest quality health information and education services created and evaluated by faculty of their partner universities. It provides definition and statistics on high blood pressure. Net Wellness also provides steps to better control high blood pressure. One main source of Net Wellness is CDC.



Department of Health and Human Services

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention also goes into the deeper effects of hypertension such as stroke and heart disease. Its goal is to raise awareness of how serious high blood pressure is. It refers to high blood pressure as the “silent killer”. They use the American Heart Association as a reference due to the heart problems associated with high blood pressure. CDC provides various statistics, which gives you a better view of the factors that may play into high blood pressure. As with other sites, it lists the main prevention and control tips.

### **Black Women’s Health**

<http://www.blackwomenshealth.com/2006/articles.php?id=72>

Black Women’s Health is “dedicated to the Health and Wellness of today’s African American women. To women it may be more of an informational site as far as high blood pressure in African Americans. It tells you how everything works with the blood, heart, vessels and lungs with blood pressure. It includes what to do at different blood pressure levels. Also, this site goes into how birth control pills increases the risk for high blood pressure, especially for women over the age of 35 who smoke.

### **Internet Resources**

**Division for Heart Disease and Stroke (2007)** *Center for Disease Control and Prevention.*

<http://www.cdc.gov/DHDSP/index.htm>

**What is High Blood Pressure (2006)** *National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.*

[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Hbp/HBP\\_WhatIs.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Hbp/HBP_WhatIs.html)

**What About African Americans and High Blood Pressure?** (2005)  
American Heart Association  
<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3031987>

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## Class Handout

- There is no basic symptom to tell if you have high blood pressure. 31.6% of people with hypertension don't even know they have it. (CDC)
- High blood pressure is also called hypertension.
- According to CDC, 49,707 Americans died from high blood pressure in 2002.
- About 1 in 3 Americans have high blood pressure; 2 in 5 African Americans have high blood pressure and only about 1 in 6 Asian and 1 in 5 Native Americans and Hispanics have high blood pressure. (CDC)
- High blood pressure could be a major cause kidney failure, but can also cause other diseases such as strokes, heart attack, and vision problems or even may lead to death.
- 35% of African Americas have hypertension, which accounts for 20% of the African American deaths in the United States; this is twice the percentage of deaths the white Americans with hypertension. (Net Wellness)
- There is no clear answer of why but the risk of high blood pressure increases in African Americans.
- There is no cure for high blood pressure, but it can be controlled.
- African Americans also have an 80% higher chance of having a stroke compared to the general population. (Net Wellness)
- Regular blood pressure is 120/80 mmHg, and high blood pressure is 140/90 mmHg.
- High blood pressure is related to heart disease and stroke, which are the two leading causes of death. (CDC)
- Ways to prevent and help high blood pressure include:
  - Lose weight, if overweight, eat heart healthfully, reduce salt and sodium intake, drink in moderation, be more physical, quit smoking and take all medicine as prescribed. (NHLBIHIN)
  - Also make sure you have your blood pressure checked regularly at your doctor.

<b>Age</b>	<b>Normal Blood Pressure Measurement</b> (in millimeters of mercury)
Newborn	Up to 70/45
5	Up to 115/75
6 to 12	Up to 125/80
13 to 15	Up to 126/78
16 to 18	Up to 120/80
Over 18	Up to 120/80 (Prehypertension: 130/80) (High blood pressure: 140/90)