

HEALTH NEWS U CAN USE

February 04, 2018

Blood Pressure and News of Strokes

During the month of February, we recognize and value our hearts. We know that the blood pulsing through our veins is important to helping our hearts function properly and keeping us alive. However, the amount of pressure that pushes the blood, is key to either our health or our sickness.

Blood Pressure

The issue that many need to consider is our blood pressure and whether it is high or low or just the right amount for our bodies.

What is high blood pressure? According to WebMD, high blood pressure is the amount of force that propels the blood through our [arteries](#) to the rest of your body. This force creates pressure on [blood](#) vessels, and that's our systolic blood pressure, or the top number in blood pressure reading.

- A normal systolic pressure is below 120.
- A reading of 120-129 is elevated.
- 130-139 is stage 1 [high blood pressure](#) (also called [hypertension](#)).
- 140 or more is stage 2 hypertension.
- 180 or more is a hypertensive crisis. Call 911 (<https://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/guide/diastolic-and-systolic-blood-pressure-know-your-numbers#1>).

The bottom number, the diastolic number, is the pressure of our heart at rest.

High Blood Pressure-Hypertension-The Silent Killer

Unfortunately, high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is dangerous for our health and can even lead to death. Often called the "silent killer" death from high blood pressure can occur without much attention. A person often does not know that high blood pressure exists, unless his/her blood pressure has been checked.

Sadly, according to the online Time Health, "deaths related to high blood pressure, have risen significantly over the last 13 years. A new report from the U.S. Centers for Disease

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Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics shows the number of hypertension-related deaths increased 61.8%, from 2000 to 2013. The researchers analyzed national cause-of-death data files and defined hypertension-related death as *any* mention of hypertension on the death certificate. They found that over the 13-year period, the rate rose for both sexes age 45 and older (<http://time.com/3758758/high-blood-pressure-related-deaths-are-way-up-cdc/>).

While not usually fatal, a blockage of a blood vessel in the brain or neck, called an ischemic stroke, is the most frequent cause of stroke and is responsible for about 80 percent of strokes. These blockages stem from three conditions:

- the formation of a clot within a blood vessel of the brain or neck, called thrombosis;
- the movement of a clot from another part of the body such as the heart to the neck or brain, called [embolism](#); or
- a severe narrowing of an artery in or leading to the brain, called stenosis.

Bleeding into the brain or the spaces surrounding the brain causes the second type of stroke, called hemorrhagic stroke.

New Findings on Stroke

According to the January 2018 *Washington Post*, there are new findings on strokes. "Strokes were the fifth-leading cause of death in the United States in 2016, when they killed 142,142 people. About 800,000 people have strokes every year, most of which are first-time events.

The vast majority of strokes are ischemic — a clot or mass blocks a vessel, cutting off the flow of blood to a portion of the brain. Those strokes kill some brain tissue and threaten more in many people. Doctors can respond with clot-dissolving medication within the first few hours and within six hours have been reaching into the blood vessel with clot-removing devices such as stents. But the studies show that they may have more time to save brain tissue where the blood supply is being choked off but the tissue has not yet died. The DEFUSE 3 study looked at 182 people in 38 medical

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centers who suffered the kinds of blockages in brain arteries that cause 50 to 60 percent of deaths and the most severe kinds of disabilities. About half received typical care, involving blood pressure medication, blood thinners and other medical interventions. The other half had images taken and the clot removal procedure, known as a "thrombectomy," as well as the medications. With this new treatment, there may be longer time given for people who have a stroke to be diagnosed and still have a chance of full recovery! (https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/new-research-will-radically-change-response-to-strokes/2018/01/24/e35da0e8-011d-11e8-8acf-ad2991367d9d_story.html?utm_term=.733351618adc).

What Are the Treatable Risk Factors?

According to an online article on stroke from medicine net, some of the most important treatable risk factors for stroke are reducing:

High blood pressure, which is by far the most potent risk factor for stroke. If your [blood pressure](#) is high, you and your doctor need to work out an individual strategy to bring it down to the normal range. Some ways that work include the following:

- Maintain proper weight.
- Avoid [drugs](#) known to raise blood pressure.
- Cut down on salt.
- Eat fruits and vegetables to increase potassium in your [diet](#).
- [Exercise](#) more.
- Your doctor may prescribe medicines that help lower blood pressure. Controlling blood pressure will also help you avoid [heart disease](#), [diabetes](#), and [kidney failure](#)

(https://www.medicinenet.com/stroke_prevention/article.htm).