

Healthy Blood Pressure: Preventing Chronic Disease

Know the Risks. Protect Your Health.



High Blood Pressure Can Damage Your Health, Even If You Feel Fine

Did you know?

In general, blood pressure increases with age, but there are particular times during a woman's life—**pregnancy**, the **postpartum period**, and **perimenopause/menopause**—when blood pressure can rise without symptoms, increasing the risk of cardiovascular problems, such as heart attack and stroke.

Even though nearly **half of the women in the U.S.** are affected by high blood pressure, **over a third** of them don't even know they have it, and among those who do, only **1 in 4 women** have their condition under control. When blood pressure stays too high over time, it damages your blood vessels and vital organs. This raises your risk for many chronic diseases, and if you already have one, high blood pressure can make it worse.

The Connection Between High Blood Pressure and Chronic Disease

There's a two-way relationship between high blood pressure and chronic diseases: Not only does high blood pressure increase the risk for developing chronic conditions such as heart disease, kidney disease, and type 2 diabetes but many chronic diseases can also worsen or cause high blood pressure, such as chronic kidney disease, diabetes, and metabolic syndrome.

Organ	What High Blood Pressure Does	What Chronic Diseases Do
Heart	Increases workload, thickens heart muscle, leads to heart failure or heart attack	Heart disease can worsen high blood pressure by impairing circulation and heart function
Kidneys	Damages blood vessels, reducing kidney function and potentially causing kidney failure	Chronic kidney disease causes fluid/sodium retention, increasing blood pressure
Brain	Raises stroke risk by damaging or blocking blood vessels	Stroke or dementia can impair regulation of blood pressure and medication adherence
Eyes	Damages blood vessels in retinas, leading to vision loss (hypertensive retinopathy)	Diabetes can damage eye vessels and raise blood pressure through vascular and metabolic changes



Life Stages That Increase Risk

Certain phases in a woman's life make her more vulnerable to developing high blood pressure and chronic disease:

- **Pregnancy:** Conditions such as preeclampsia, a dangerous rise in blood pressure during pregnancy that can affect both mother and baby, signal a higher risk for future cardiovascular and kidney problems.
 - **The Postpartum Period** (the time that begins right after a woman gives birth, lasting about six weeks): High blood pressure can remain high or appear after delivery, even after healthy pregnancies.
 - **Perimenopause/Menopause:** Hormonal changes, combined with aging, can increase blood pressure and chronic disease risk.
- Women with chronic conditions such as **polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)**, **diabetes**, **obesity**, and **autoimmune diseases** are at even greater risk.

PREVENTION & EARLY DETECTION: WHAT YOU CAN DO

✓ Check Your Numbers

Monitor blood pressure:

- **At least once a year** if you are 40 or older or if you're at higher risk—including if you are currently pregnant or had high blood pressure during a past pregnancy, are overweight or obese, don't get enough exercise, smoke or drink too much alcohol, have kidney failure, diabetes, or heart disease, or have a family history of high blood pressure.
- **Every three to five years** if you are 18 to 39 years old and at low risk for high blood pressure.

Know the healthy range for most people:
<120/80 mm Hg

✓ Adopt Heart-Healthy Habits

- **Eat smart:** Focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-sodium foods.
- **Move daily:** Aim for 150 minutes per week of moderate physical activity.
- **Limit alcohol and avoid tobacco.**
- **Manage stress** through breathing exercises, mindfulness, and adequate sleep.

✓ Stay Consistent

- **Take medications** as prescribed.
- **Track and monitor** your blood pressure at home.
- **Follow up** with your health care provider regularly.

Take Action Today to Prevent Disease Tomorrow

High blood pressure often develops quietly, but its consequences aren't silent.

By catching it early and making lifestyle changes, you can prevent or delay the onset of major chronic diseases that affect millions of women every year.



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