

Our Health

Take Charge Of Your Health Today To Help Prevent Stroke & Dementia Tomorrow

(NAPS)—For many health conditions, Black/African Americans are impacted at disproportionate rates. High blood pressure is the leading modifiable risk factor for stroke, cardiovascular disease, and dementia. Black/African Americans are 50 percent more likely to have high blood pressure when compared to other racial and ethnic groups, and Black/African American men have the highest rate of uncontrolled blood pressure.

Many other factors can increase your risk of high blood pressure, including genetics and family history, having certain medical conditions, and lifestyle factors. While you can't change your genetics, there are many simple and effective lifestyle changes you can make that can help control your blood pressure and lower your risk of stroke and dementia later in life.

"People need to think about how they can decrease their chances of developing stroke and dementia in later life," said Dr. Walter Koroshetz, Director of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). "With what we now know, controlling hypertension in mid-life is at the top of the list." That's why NINDS developed the Mind Your Risks® campaign to raise awareness of this important health topic and steps to take to lower risks.

What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries when the heart is contracting and while it is resting. High blood pressure, also called hypertension, is blood pressure that is higher than normal. You can have high blood pressure without having any symptoms or warning signs associated with it, so it's important to check it regularly.

Normal Blood Pressure for Most Adults:

Less than 120/80 mm Hg

High Blood Pressure:

130 or higher/80 or higher mm Hg

How does high blood pressure lead to stroke and dementia?

- If your blood pressure stays high, over time it can damage brain blood vessels and lead to a stroke.
- High blood pressure can also lead to other damage in the brain that has been associated with dementia, which can lead to problems with thinking, learning, and memory.



Take charge of your health, because nobody can lower your risk of stroke and dementia like you.

How does high blood pressure, stroke, and dementia

impact Black/African American men?

Black/African American men have higher rates of uncontrolled blood pressure. Uncontrolled blood pressure in early to mid-life leads to more opportunity for damage to the arteries, brain, and heart. These factors place Black men at higher risk for developing long-term complications, including stroke, cardiovascular disease, and dementia.

How can I control my blood pressure to lower my risks?

You can take steps now to get—or keep—your blood pressure numbers in a healthy range to help prevent stroke and dementia later in life. These include:

- **Stay informed.** Discuss high blood pressure with your healthcare provider.
- **Take your medications.** Your healthcare provider may recommend taking medicine to prevent stroke and heart attack, especially if you have high blood pressure, diabetes, or elevated cholesterol.
- **Eat healthy and exercise.** Following a healthy eating plan and keeping physically active on a regular basis will significantly lower your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and other health problems.
- **Quit smoking or using tobacco.** Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body, including the heart. Any amount of smoking, even light or occasional smoking, damages the heart and blood vessels.

Take charge of your health today. Because nobody can lower your risk of stroke and dementia like you. For more information, visit mindyourrisks.nih.gov.