

THE SYMPTOMS OF HEART ATTACK

- Discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back; discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, and pain
- Shortness of breath
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Breaking out in a cold sweat, light-headedness, or nausea

THE SYMPTOMS OF HEART FAILURE

- Shortness of breath during mild or usual activities
- General tiredness and weakness
- Trouble breathing when lying down
- Weight gain with swelling in the legs, lower back, or ankles from fluid buildup

THE SYMPTOMS OF STROKE

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

the good news is...

- **Treating hypertension reduces the risk of stroke 35% to 40%**
- **Treating hypertension reduces the risk of heart attack 20% to 25%**
- **Treating hypertension reduces the risk of heart failure by more than 50%**

For more information: Talk to your physician or visit controlhypertension.org.

The Cardiovascular Effects of Untreated High Blood Pressure

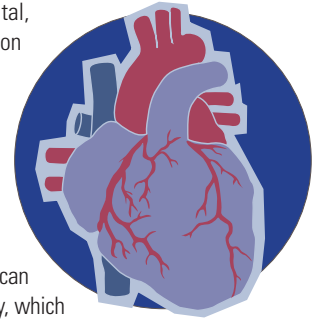
High blood pressure (hypertension) is called the “silent killer” for good reason. Hypertension has no real symptoms. In fact, approximately 30% of the people who have high blood pressure don’t know it.

And some medical problems caused by untreated high blood pressure can be fatal, such as heart disease, heart attack, stroke, and kidney disease. In 2002 hypertension was the cause of death for almost 50,000 Americans and contributed to the deaths of many others. In fact, people with uncontrolled hypertension may be:

- **three** times as likely to develop heart disease,
- **six** times as likely to suffer heart failure, and
- **seven** times as likely to have a stroke...

...as those who *do* control their high blood pressure with both medications and healthy lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise.

When high blood pressure isn’t diagnosed or treated, the health effects over time can be severe. Doctors are diagnosing hypertension earlier and treating it more effectively, which has lowered the rates of some complications of hypertension. But uncontrolled hypertension can lead to more serious health problems. That’s why you should get tested and act early to treat hypertension for better health.



HYPERTENSION AND HEART HEALTH

In high blood pressure, the force of the blood against artery walls is too high. This causes the walls of the arteries to grow thicker, less elastic, and “harder” (as in hardening of the arteries, or atherosclerosis), and narrows the opening in the blood vessels through which blood flows.

The extra workload on the heart causes the heart muscle to get larger to compensate. But for heart muscle, “bulking up” *isn’t* a good thing. In the long term, the enlarged heart muscle becomes weaker and needs more oxygen to pump the same amount of blood to the body’s organs. This can lead to heart failure.

HEART FAILURE

Heart failure doesn’t mean that the heart has stopped, but it can no longer pump enough blood and oxygen to meet the body’s needs. Heart failure is a serious condition that puts people at high risk of dying. People with heart failure tire easily, have shortness of breath with even mild activity, and suffer from fluid buildup (see *The Symptoms of Heart Failure*). Heart failure makes it difficult for people to take part in everyday activities and work. Hypertension is the chief risk factor for heart failure.

Early diagnosis and treatment can improve both the quality of life and life expectancy of people with heart failure. Treatment for heart failure usually involves one or more of the following types of medication: angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs), diuretics (“water pills”), beta blockers, and digoxin.

People with heart failure also need to follow their doctor’s advice about a healthy diet, reduce consumption of dietary salt (sodium), drink alcohol only in moderation, and exercise to build up their fitness level.

HEART ATTACK

High blood pressure speeds the development of atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis causes the build-up of fatty plaque in the arteries. Clots can break off the plaque and lodge in the arteries to the heart, blocking oxygen from getting to the heart muscle and causing a heart attack.

Heart attacks are life-threatening events that require emergency treatment. Learn about the symptoms of a heart attack (see *The Symptoms of Heart Attack*) because if care is received quickly enough, doctors may be able to restore blood flow using special clot-busting medications and prevent lasting damage and even death.

STROKE

Hypertension is the leading risk factor for stroke. Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States. Like heart attacks, stroke is caused by a blood clot that breaks loose from plaque in the arteries. In stroke, however, the clot lodges in an artery to the brain. This blocks blood and oxygen from getting to part of the brain, causing problems that can include memory loss and paralysis. It’s important to recognize stroke symptoms (see *The Symptoms of Stroke*) and get immediate access to emergency medical services.

GET TESTED

Safeguard your health sooner rather than later. Don’t wait: make an appointment with your doctor today.

SOURCES

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