

Non-Hispanic Black women face staggering hypertension rates and ineffective treatment outcomes

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Nearly half of the adult population has hypertension, with the incidence increasing as people age. Hypertension is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease and uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, myocardial infarction, heart failure, end-organ damage, and early death. Hypertension costs the United States billions of dollars every year in hospital fees. On average, men develop high blood pressure at earlier ages, however, hypertension poses a greater burden for women than men. Non-Hispanic Black (NHB) women are particularly susceptible to developing hypertension and have a higher prevalence than black men at any age over 20. Various factors contribute to the current trend that is seen for NHB people in the United States including the pathophysiology of hypertension in those of African ancestry, lack of education, increased weight, discrimination, and management of hypertension. These factors, however, do not fully explain why NHB women have higher rates of hypertension than NHB men, especially when the opposite trend is often seen with women of other races. Some studies suggest stress and stigma as important factors in the development of high blood pressure for NHB women. Still, many gaps in knowledge persist. This review aims to address some of those gaps, such as if this pattern of hypertension is seen with NHB women in other parts of the world, and if not, what factors may be contributing to these differences in blood pressure.