



National Kidney
Foundation®

Winning the Fight
Against Silent Killers:
High Blood Pressure and Diabetes



More than 90 million Americans have high blood pressure or diabetes. Although these diseases can affect anyone at any age, African Americans have a greater risk of developing them. Consider the following facts:

- The prevalence of high blood pressure among African Americans in the United States is one of the highest in the world. High blood pressure strikes one out of three African Americans and two out of three over age 65.
- Diabetes is also a serious problem for African Americans. Over three million African Americans have diabetes. Death rates for people with diabetes are 27 percent higher for African Americans compared with white Americans.
- Because they have a higher prevalence of these two diseases, African Americans are more likely to develop complications, such as heart and blood vessel disease and chronic kidney disease than white Americans.

The problems associated with high blood pressure and diabetes are serious. Solutions are not easy, but are possible. We must begin by educating ourselves and our families about these diseases and how they affect our lives. We must also identify the steps to take to prevent these diseases and to treat them effectively when they do occur.



High Blood Pressure

What is high blood pressure?

High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is often called a "silent killer" because it usually causes no symptoms until it becomes severe, when it might cause occasional headaches, and/or vision changes. High blood pressure is a leading cause of heart attacks, strokes and chronic kidney disease.

High blood pressure means the pressure inside the blood vessels is increased above normal. When this happens, the heart has to work harder to pump blood through the body. Blood pressure is measured as two numbers: a top number (called the systolic pressure) and a bottom number (called the diastolic pressure). For example, 120/75 is read as 120 over 75. Normal blood pressure in adults 18 and older is less than 120/80. People who have blood

pressure between 120 and 139 for the top number or between 80 and 89 for the bottom number may have an increased chance of



developing high blood pressure unless they take steps to prevent it. Blood pressure is considered high if it is 140/90 or above.

However, for people who have diabetes or chronic kidney disease, blood pressure is high if it is 130/80 or above. If you

have high blood pressure, the goal is to get your pressure below 140/90 and keep it there.

Recognizing these facts about high blood pressure may save your life:

- High blood pressure occurs mostly in adults but children are also at risk.
- High blood pressure may damage blood vessels in the kidneys, heart, eyes and brain so that these organs cannot function normally.
- High blood pressure can be treated effectively with medicine, diet and a healthy lifestyle.

What causes high blood pressure?

In most cases, the causes of high blood pressure are not known. Nevertheless, some studies suggest that African Americans may develop high blood pressure more often because of:

- (1) genetic makeup, which increases your chances of getting high blood pressure; and
- (2) lifestyle, including diet and exercise patterns.

Some lifestyle factors that may increase the chance of developing high blood pressure are:

- Use of salt—African Americans are included within a number of people whose blood pressure increases in response to a high salt intake. A high-salt diet can lead to high blood pressure or make existing high blood pressure worse.
- Weight—Being overweight increases your chance of developing high blood pressure.
- Exercise—Lack of regular exercise increases your chance of developing high blood pressure and can worsen existing high blood pressure.

What should you do if you have high blood pressure?

Even after high blood pressure is diagnosed, diet and exercise play an important role in keeping it under control. Following a healthy diet is important to reduce the chance that high blood pressure may lead to serious problems like heart attack, chronic kidney disease and stroke.

Follow these important steps to control high blood pressure:

- Have your blood pressure checked often.
- Watch your weight (maintain a healthy weight for your size).
- Take your medication exactly as prescribed. Report any side effects to your doctor who can change the amount of medicine you take or order a new medicine for you.
- If you smoke, quit.
- If you drink alcohol, limit your intake.
- Lower your salt intake. Use spices and herbs, instead of salt, to add flavor to food.
- Exercise regularly. Check with your doctor about an exercise program that is right for you.
- Other things that may help include: eating more foods that are high in calcium, such as low-fat dairy products, and eating more foods that have potassium, such as bananas, oranges, potatoes, tomatoes and greens. People who have chronic kidney disease should not make changes in their diet without first speaking to their doctors.



Diabetes

What is diabetes?

With diabetes, blood sugar is consistently too high. Diabetes occurs when your body is unable to make enough insulin or use normal amounts of insulin properly. Insulin is a hormone that controls the amount of sugar in your blood. Diabetes can cause damage to many parts of the body, including the heart, kidneys, eyes and brain. People with diabetes often develop serious complications, including high blood pressure, heart disease, chronic kidney disease and blindness.

Are there different kinds of diabetes?

Yes. Type 1 diabetes (also called insulin-dependent diabetes) generally begins when people are young. Usually in this case, the pancreas does not produce enough insulin.

Type 2 diabetes (also called non-insulin-dependent diabetes) occurs mainly in adults over 45, but is becoming more common in younger people. It is usually associated with being overweight and tends to run in families. In most of these cases, the pancreas makes enough insulin, but the body cannot use it properly.

How do you know if you have diabetes?

Your doctor will take your medical history and do a physical examination including blood tests for diabetes. Untreated diabetes may result in the following symptoms:

- Being thirstier than usual
- Needing to pass urine much more often
- Being hungrier than normal
- Feeling more tired
- Losing weight, even if you are eating more than usual.

It is also possible to have diabetes and have few or no symptoms. Yet even this mild form of diabetes, if untreated, can cause damage to your kidneys, eyes, brain and heart. For this reason, it is important to visit your doctor or clinic regularly and have your blood sugar checked. You should also check your own blood sugar as often as your doctor recommends.

Can you prevent diabetes?

In many cases, diabetes is inherited. Studies suggest that some cases of type 2 diabetes may be caused by being overweight. That's why a healthy diet and regular exercise may help to prevent this type of diabetes.

What should you do if you have diabetes?

If you are found to have diabetes, you should:

- See your doctor regularly.
- Check your blood sugar often.
- Follow a healthy diet.
- Have your blood pressure checked often. (If you have diabetes, your target blood pressure is less than 130/80.)
- Take all medication exactly as prescribed.
- Quit smoking.
- Limit your intake of alcoholic beverages.
- Ask your doctor about an exercise program that is right for you.



What else can you do to win the fight against the "silent killers?"

A healthy diet and regular exercise may help to prevent high blood pressure and some types of diabetes. In general, you should eat more fruits and vegetables, more whole-grain breads and cereals, and fewer red meats, oils and fats. Here are some additional suggestions to help with the selection and preparation of healthier foods:

- Avoid processed foods like cold cuts, sugar-sweetened cereals and greasy snacks.
- Limit fatty meats. When you do eat them, trim away the visible fat and eat a smaller portion.
- Learn how to read labels. Choose foods that are low in fat and sodium (salt).
- Buy fresh or frozen vegetables rather than canned.
- Eat foods with natural fiber, such as fresh vegetables, fruits and whole grain, unsweetened cereals.
- Prepare foods by baking or broiling rather than pan frying or deep frying.
- If someone else cooks for you, show them this booklet and tell them how to reduce salt and fat in your diet.

Win the fight against high blood pressure and diabetes by going to your doctor or clinic at least twice a year. If you do develop high blood pressure or diabetes, follow your doctor's recommendations and take your medication exactly as prescribed. A healthy diet and regular exercise can also help to control your disease. In some cases, these steps may even help to prevent disease.

Ask your doctor about having two simple tests to help detect chronic kidney disease at an early stage. These are:

- A test for protein in your urine. This simple test can be done in your doctor's office, at your clinic or in a laboratory. It takes only a few minutes, and you should be able to get your results right away. Two positive results over a period of several weeks are an early sign of chronic kidney disease.
- A blood test for creatinine, which is a waste product from muscle activity. Your doctor can use the results of your blood creatinine test to find your glomerular filtration rate, or GFR. Your GFR tells how much kidney function you have. A low level of GFR may mean your kidneys are not working well enough to remove wastes from your body.

This brochure is not a substitute for an informed discussion with your doctor.

THE NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION

The National Kidney Foundation (NKF) is dedicated to preventing kidney diseases, improving the health and well-being of individuals and families affected by these diseases and increasing the availability of all organs for transplantation.

With offices nationwide, the NKF provides early detection screenings and other vital patient and community services. The Foundation conducts extensive public and professional education, advocates for patients through legislative action, promotes organ donation and supports kidney research to identify new treatments.

In 2009 NKF launched a groundbreaking multifaceted collaborative initiative to "END THE WAIT!" for a kidney transplant in the United States in 10 years by using proven strategies to eliminate barriers to donation and institute best practices across the country.

The NKF relies on individual and corporate donations, foundation and government grants, membership and special events to support its range of programs, services and initiatives.

A Curriculum for CKD Risk Reduction and Care

Public Education		Kidney Learning Solutions (KLS®)				
At ↑ Risk						
STAGE 1 Kidney Damage with Normal or ↑ Kidney Function	STAGE 2 Kidney Damage with Mild ↓ Kidney Function	STAGE 3 Moderate ↓ Kidney Function	STAGE 4 Severe ↓ Kidney Function	STAGE 5 Kidney Failure		
T	T	T	T	T	D	
GFR 130	90	60	30	15	0	

Orange colored boxes indicate the scope of content in this KLS resource.
GFR= Glomerular Filtration Rate; T= Kidney Transplant; D= Dialysis



**National Kidney
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**Kidney Learning
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