



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Common, Deadly, and Preventable

Vital Signs: Prevalence, Treatment, and Control of Hypertension — United States, 1999–2008

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

One third of U.S. adults have a common and deadly condition, and many don't even know it. A recent study found that 68 million U.S. adults have high blood pressure, the leading cause of heart disease. Of these, more than half didn't have the condition under control.

Cathleen Gillespie is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of controlling high blood pressure. Welcome to the show, Cathleen.

[Ms. Gillespie] Thank you, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Cathleen, how many people in the U.S. die each year from heart disease?

[Ms. Gillespie] Including stroke and other cardiovascular diseases, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. and it kills more than 800,000 people each year. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, contributes to one out of every seven deaths in this country.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is considered high blood pressure?

[Ms. Gillespie] Blood pressure readings are usually given as two numbers. The first number is your systolic blood pressure. The second number is your diastolic blood pressure. For example, a normal blood pressure is considered to be 120 over 80 or less. People are considered to be hypertensive if their blood pressure is 140 over 90 or higher on two or more occasions.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is high blood pressure more common in any particular age, sex, or racial/ethnic group?

[Ms. Gillespie] Men and women are equally as likely to have high blood pressure, but African Americans and older Americans are more likely to have high blood pressure than their younger counterparts or people of other racial and ethnic groups.

[Dr. Gaynes] Cathleen, how often should people have their blood pressure checked?

[Ms. Gillespie] People should have their blood pressure checked at least once every two years. However, people that have already been diagnosed with hypertension or with risk factors for cardiovascular disease should monitor their blood pressure more closely.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the best ways to control high blood pressure?

[Ms. Gillespie] Well, there are two components that are important to controlling high blood pressure. The first is medication. If your health care provider has prescribed medication, then it's *critical* that you take it as directed. The other important component are lifestyle behaviors and those include achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight, participating in regular physical activity, not smoking, limiting alcohol intake, and eating a healthy diet that is low in salt.

[Dr. Gaynes] So where does the salt in our diet actually come from?

[Ms. Gillespie] Only about one tenth of the salt we eat comes from the salt shaker. Most of it comes from processed foods that we buy in the grocery store or from restaurants. So it's important to eat a diet that's rich in things like fresh fruits and vegetables.

[Dr. Gaynes] Cathleen, where can listeners get more information about controlling high blood pressure?

[Ms. Gillespie] Listeners can go to www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure - that's one word.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Cathleen. I've been talking today with CDC's Cathleen Gillespie about the dangers of high blood pressure.

Remember: High blood pressure can be prevented with lifestyle changes, such as physical activity and a healthy diet that's low in salt. Make an appointment soon if you haven't had a check up recently. If you have high blood pressure, work with your health care provider on a plan to control it which may include lifestyle changes and medications. It's essential that you take all blood pressure medications as directed.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.