



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Take the Pressure Off Your Heart*

*Prevalence of Self-Reported Hypertension and Antihypertensive Medication Use Among Adults Aged  $\geq 18$  Years — United States, 2011-2015*

Recorded: February 27, 2018; posted: March 1, 2018

*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Kathleen Dooling] 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. Kathleen Dooling.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, affects nearly one in three adults in America. It's a major cause of heart disease and stroke, two of the leading causes of death in the U.S.

Dr. Carma Ayala is with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of controlling blood pressure. Welcome to the show, Carma.

[Dr. Ayala] Thank you, Kathleen. It's a pleasure to be here.

[Dr. Dooling] Carma, what is hypertension?

[Dr. Ayala] Kathleen, hypertension is frequently called high blood pressure, and that is when the blood pressure is measured and found to be abnormally high, that is over 130/80. Hypertension is diagnosed when a health care provider measures your blood pressure and finds it to be consistently high, which we define as being on three or more occasions.

[Dr. Dooling] How many people in the U.S. have been diagnosed with hypertension?

[Dr. Ayala] Well, during 2015 to 2016 it is estimated that about 86 million people, or 29 percent of American adults, have high blood pressure. And nearly half of those do not have their blood pressure under control. It's also important to know that 17 million, or 20 percent, are not even aware they have high blood pressure.

[Dr. Dooling] What are the symptoms of hypertension?

[Dr. Ayala] Well, you know, few people are actually aware of symptoms and symptoms can be like sweating, anxiety, sleeping problems, or even blushing when the blood pressure is high. If the blood pressure reaches extremely high levels, many people can experience headaches and nose bleeds. However, it's very important to know that most people with hypertension are asymptomatic, which means they don't really experience any symptoms at all, and that's why it's called "the silent killer."

[Dr. Dooling] If there are no symptoms, how does someone know if they have hypertension?

[Dr. Ayala] Well, the best way to know if you have hypertension is to have your blood pressure checked annually by a health care provider. And for those who have diagnosed hypertension, they should follow their health care provider's advice on how frequent to check their blood pressure and keep their blood pressure controlled.

[Dr. Dooling] What are the health problems associated with hypertension?

[Dr. Ayala] Chronic hypertension, or long term hypertension, if it goes undetected or just not controlled, it can cause some serious complications, such as damage to the heart that leads to heart failure or heart attacks; damage to the brain leading to stroke; damage to other internal organs, such as the kidneys, leading to kidney failure; and it can affect the eye, leading to blindness, which is another reason why it's important for regular blood pressure measurements, or checks, to help people avoid the more severe complications.

[Dr. Dooling] What are some ways to control hypertension?

[Dr. Ayala] Some types of hypertension can be managed through lifestyle and dietary choices. For instance, exercise, reducing alcohol, cessation of tobacco use, avoiding diets with high sodium or high fats, and that can be achieved eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. If they aren't effective, then the health care provider may prescribe one or more medications to control the blood pressure.

[Dr. Dooling] Where can listeners get more information about hypertension?

[Dr. Ayala] Listeners can go to [cdc.gov/dhdsp](http://cdc.gov/dhdsp).

[Dr. Dooling] Thanks, Carma. I've been talking today with Dr. Carma Ayala about the importance of controlling blood pressure. Annual blood pressure checks can determine whether you have hypertension. Awareness is key to avoiding the serious health problems associated with hypertension.

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

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.