

# Black People With Hypertension Throughout Life Face Higher Risk of Heart Failure

To protect African Americans' future heart health, doctors should begin monitoring individuals' blood pressure when adolescence begins.

February 9, 2021 By [Alicia Green](#)

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New findings published in the Journal of the American Heart Association suggest that experiencing hypertension over the course of their lives puts Black people at greater risk of [congestive heart failure](#), reports [Jagwire](#), a news service of Augusta University in Georgia.

For the study, researchers at the academic institution examined 673 people (50% were male and 50% female; half were Black and half white) who were followed for more than 30 years as part of the Augusta Heart Study. (The inquiry observed the development of cardiovascular risk factors in children with a family history of hypertension and heart attack.)

The investigation showed that compared with white people, Black individuals began to exhibit signs of slightly diminished heart muscle strength and higher blood pressure starting in early childhood—factors linked to an escalated risk of developing congestive heart failure later in life.

Researchers suggested that one significant factor in this early evidence of racial disparity is the tendency for more Black people to retain sodium rather than excreting it in urine. (Higher sodium levels are known to increase fluid volume inside the blood vessels, which ups blood pressure.)

Investigators also determined that the widely used method to assess heart muscle strength known as ejection fraction wasn't an adequate way to identify young people most at risk. Instead, scientists suggested that doctors use midwall fractional shortening, as this procedure provides better and earlier insight into the heart's muscle ability to contract.

In addition, scientists urged Black parents to take their children to the doctor to get blood pressure checkups beginning in early adolescence.

Gaston Kapuku, MD, PhD, a cardiovascular researcher at Augusta University and one of the study's authors, also advised that children with chronically higher normal blood pressure should receive an early evaluation of their heart function and/or medication to help decrease blood pressure to

preserve their heart health later on.

Kapuku recommended that young Black people follow a low-salt, high-potassium diet by eating such foods as cooked broccoli and spinach, plantains and sweet potatoes. Regular physical activity can also help, but “medical treatment may be the ticket to longevity,” Kapuku added.

For related coverage, read “[Inequity to Blame for Poor Blood Pressure Control Among Black Patients](#)” and “[High Blood Pressure Can Accelerate Cognitive Decline No Matter the Age of Onset.](#)”

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