

Long-Term High Blood Pressure Increases Stroke Risk in Latinos

The study highlights the cumulative effects of years of having high systolic blood pressure, especially in Latino and Black adults.

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A new study by University of Michigan Medicine researchers emphasizes the importance of diagnosing [high blood pressure](#) early to reduce the risk of [stroke](#), according to a [university news release](#).

Published in [JAMA Network Open](#), the study analyzed the long-term effects of high systolic blood pressure—the top number on a blood pressure reading. Findings showed that years of high systolic blood pressure can lead to an increased risk of having two of the most common types of stroke, especially for Latinos and African Americans, who are already more likely to have uncontrolled high blood pressure.

[High blood pressure](#) is sometimes called the “silent killer.” Most people with high blood pressure don’t have any symptoms, such as sweating or headaches. For this reason, many people don’t think they need to get their [blood pressure](#) checked but even if you feel fine, your health may be at risk.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 40,000 people 18 years or older with no history of stroke to determine their average systolic blood pressure years before their first stroke. They looked at three types of stroke: ischemic, intracerebral hemorrhage and subarachnoid hemorrhage.

Results showed that people who had a systolic blood pressure 10 mm Hg higher than average had a 20% higher risk of overall stroke and ischemic stroke. This group also had a 31% increased risk of intracerebral hemorrhage.

Latinos involved in the study had a 281% higher risk of subarachnoid hemorrhage compared with

white people. Black folks had a 20% higher risk of ischemic stroke and a 67% higher risk of intracerebral hemorrhage compared with white people.

“Our results suggest that early diagnosis and sustained control of high blood pressure over the lifespan are critical to preventing stroke, ischemic stroke and intracerebral hemorrhage, especially in Black and Hispanic patients who are more likely to have uncontrolled hypertension than white patients,” said senior author Deborah Levine, MD, MPH, a professor of internal medicine and neurology at the University of Michigan Medical School.

Although Latino and Black adults had a higher risk of stroke, there was little evidence to suggest that race influenced the association between systolic blood pressure and stroke risk.

“Examining racial inequities advances our understanding of the social, economic and political structures that affect health behaviors and risk for stroke among racial and ethnic minority groups,” said first author Kimson Johnson, PhD, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Michigan.

Researchers urge adults to check their own blood pressure at home, which is not only accurate but easy and cost effective.

“Health care systems and providers must educate and urge their patients to do home blood pressure monitoring, and insurers must pay for home blood pressure monitors to optimize people’s blood pressure and reduce their chances of having a stroke,” Levine said.