

Many Americans Have Misconceptions About High Blood Pressure

Only 13% of U.S. adults know the correct reading that reflects high blood pressure.

June 20, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

More than a third of Americans don't know that [high blood pressure](#) is a "silent killer," according to a [new survey](#) by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center (AAPC).

Most people with high blood pressure, also known as [hypertension](#), don't have any symptoms, such as sweating, dizziness or headaches. Nearly 4 in 10 respondents said that feeling calm and relaxed is a sign that blood pressure is in a normal range, which is false.

For these reasons, 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.

Nearly half of U.S. adults, approximately 119 million people, have hypertension, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Latino adults have some of the highest prevalence of poorly controlled blood pressure compared with any other racial group in the United States. If left untreated, can lead to serious health problems including [heart disease](#), [stroke](#) and kidney failure.

The survey of 1,653 U.S. adults also found that only 13% know how the correct reading that reflects high blood pressure: 130/80. What's more, a quarter of respondents thought that high blood pressure starts at 140/90, which was true before the American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology revised their guidelines in 2017.

"Because controlling blood pressure reduces one's risk of serious health problems, including heart attacks and strokes, correcting misperceptions about ways to identify it should be a public health priority," said Patrick Jamieson, PhD, director of the policy center's Annenberg Health and Risk

Communication Institute, in an [AAPC news release](#).

Despite misconceptions, the survey found that many Americans are familiar with the measures that can help lower high blood pressure, including:

- Maintaining a healthy weight (91%);
- Regularly exercising (89%);
- Eating a healthy diet (89%);
- Taking medication (84%);
- Reducing salt intake (82%).

What's more, many respondents said that if their doctor or health care provider recommended the following actions to control hypertension, they are "somewhat likely" or "very likely" to do them or "already do them regularly":

- Watching what they eat to maintain healthy nutrition (92%);
- Limiting salt intake (88%);
- Exercising regularly (88%)
- Getting to and maintaining a healthy weight (88%);
- Monitoring their blood pressure readings (87%);
- Taking blood pressure medication (79%).

"The high level of public knowledge about the habits that reduce blood pressure is heartening and a tribute to the health care providers and public health agencies that have centered this health indicator in the national consciousness," APPC research analyst Laura Gibson, PhD, said in a news release.

To read more, click [#High Blood Pressure](#). There, you'll see headlines such as "[Mexican American Women Less Likely to Take Stroke-Prevention Meds](#)," "[Deadly High Blood Pressure During Pregnancy Is on the Rise](#)" and "[Long-Term High Blood Pressure Increases Stroke Risk in Latinos](#)."

