

High blood pressure common among black young adults

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About one in four young adults has high blood pressure. But few are

getting treated, with new research concluding black young adults are especially vulnerable.

In a study that included 15,171 black, Mexican American and white adults, researchers found that nearly 31% of black young adults had high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. It was the [highest rate](#) among the three groups studied.

"Young adults are often left out of cardiovascular disease studies," said Dr. Vibhu Parcha, a clinical research fellow at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. "But to prevent [heart disease](#) and the racial disparities we see in [older adults](#), we need to start looking at younger populations."

Parcha will present the preliminary study Sunday at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions conference in Philadelphia.

Many adults with high blood pressure remain undiagnosed, while others who have been diagnosed do not have their disease properly controlled.

"When young adults have high blood pressure that is not controlled, they begin accumulating cardiovascular risk at a very young age," said Dr. Cheryl Himmelfarb, professor and vice dean for research at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing in Baltimore. This, in turn, puts them at risk for having a heart attack or stroke at an early age, she said.

Parcha and his colleagues also studied changes over time in young adults' awareness, treatment and control of high blood pressure. They noted the "

"We found that black young adults have higher awareness and higher treatment rates than the other groups," said Parcha. "But control rates of their disease are poorer than what is seen in middle-aged and older

adults."

Social factors and biology might both play a part in these disparities.

Previous studies have found high blood pressure is more common among black adults than adults of other races. The new study sheds light on how early this disparity begins.

"We need to understand the social and economic determinants that influence high blood pressure care behaviors," said Himmelfarb, who was not involved with the study.

"We also need to ensure [health care providers](#) understand that these disparities exist so that they are screening for and effectively managing high blood pressure in young adults who they might otherwise see as healthy."

Risk factors for [high blood pressure](#) include not getting enough exercise, an unhealthy diet, being overweight or obese, drinking too much alcohol, high cholesterol, smoking and diabetes.

"Hopefully this study will drive us to allocate resources to research [young adults](#) and lifestyle modification interventions tailored to meet the needs of this very high-risk population," Himmelfarb said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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