

Seeing doctor twice a year helps keep blood pressure under control

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People who visited their doctor at least twice a year were 3.2 times more likely to keep their blood pressure under control than those who saw their doctor once a year or less, according to new research in the American Heart Association's journal *Circulation*.

Having healthcare insurance and getting treated for high cholesterol also increased the likelihood of keeping blood pressure under control. Ideal blood pressure, measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg), is less than 120/80 mm Hg. Blood pressure 140 mm Hg or greater on the top (systolic) or 90 mm Hg or greater on the bottom (diastolic) is considered high.

Obese people in the study were also more likely to keep their blood pressure under control, "probably because doctors recognize the need to control risk factors and may be quicker to give them blood pressure medications," said Brent M. Egan, M.D., study author and professor of medicine at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine in Greenville and senior medical director of the Care Coordination Institute.

Egan's data included reports on 37,000 adults in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey who had their blood pressure checked in 1999-2012.

After controlling for diabetes, health insurance, body mass index, smoking and other factors, Egan found that doctor visits were the strongest predictor of [blood pressure control](#).

Uncontrolled blood pressure is a leading cause of heart attack and stroke. About 69 percent of people who have a first heart attack, 77 percent who have a first stroke and 74 percent who have congestive heart failure have blood pressure higher than 140/90 mm Hg.

As many as 80 percent of the 78 million adults with

[high blood pressure](#) know they have the condition. But only 75 percent are treated and only about half have it controlled below 140/90 mm Hg, according to American Heart Association statistics.

The American Heart Association recommends that people with [blood pressure](#) readings of 140/90 mm Hg or higher make lifestyle changes such as losing weight, eating healthy and engaging in physical activity, and if necessary, take medicine.

Provided by American Heart Association

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