

# Take a free test that could possibly save your life

April 14 2017

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As part of #CheckIt, the American Heart Association (AHA) – the world's leading voluntary health organization devoted to fighting cardiovascular disease – wants people to check their own blood pressure by May 17, World Hypertension Day, which is part of National High Blood Pressure Education Month. Through World Hypertension Day, the American Heart Association is joining other organizations in striving to reach 25 million blood pressure checks globally (5 million in the U.S.). Also, participants are encouraged to [log their action and learn about high blood pressure](#).

Recent data from the Non-Communicable Disease Risk Factor Collaboration shows there are about one billion people in the world who have high [blood pressure](#). In the United States, nearly 86 million adults have high blood pressure.

According to the American Heart Association, high blood pressure is almost always preventable with simple steps, yet it kills more people worldwide than any other health condition. Taking control starts with a simple action—getting your blood pressure checked.

"Few severe health conditions are ignored as much as high blood pressure. It's like having too much pressure in a pipe. It damages the pipe, but you often don't see a problem until the pipe bursts or becomes clogged," said Willie Lawrence, M.D., an interventional cardiologist for Midwest Heart & Vascular Specialists in Kansas City and an American Heart Association volunteer. "It is a symptomless disease, so the best

way to combat it is to check it regularly to know if you need to start or change treatment."

Community groups, clinics and workplaces can hold blood pressure checks for large groups through programs like the American Heart Association's [Check. Change. Control.](#) initiative. Participants in this free, science-based program have seen blood pressure drop, and one-third improved their level of [blood pressure control](#).

Such programs can be particularly important for those known to face higher risks. Nearly half of all African-Americans have high blood pressure, dramatically increasing their chance of stroke. And blacks, along with Hispanic-Americans, are less likely to have their blood pressure under control, according to [recent research](#).

According to the American Heart Association's most recent statistics, one in three American adults already has high blood pressure, which can cause heart attack, stroke, heart failure, kidney disease and even vision loss. It also takes a toll on the brain. Research shows that 45- to 64-year-olds with high [blood pressure](#) face an almost 40 percent greater chance of dementia compared to those with [normal blood pressure](#).

But getting a grip on [high blood pressure](#) could reduce deaths from [heart disease](#) and stroke by 30 percent in men and 38 percent in women, according to the Association.

Healthcare providers may prescribe medication in addition to lifestyle changes—like limiting salt and alcohol, getting regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight.

"It may take a few tries to find the right medicine, or combination of medicines, to fit your needs," Lawrence said. "It's important that you keep an open dialogue with your provider, and use tools like connected

devices, mobile apps or web-based tracking programs to help gather the data you need about your condition and share it with your doctor."

**More information:** For more information, visit [heart.org/hbp](http://heart.org/hbp)

Provided by American Heart Association

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