

# Pressure of housework can be bad for the heart

January 19 2011, by Lin Edwards

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A medical student checking blood pressure using a sphygmomanometer and stethoscope. Image: Wikipedia.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Researchers in the US have discovered that in busy people housework such as cleaning, cooking, home maintenance, and even budgeting, can raise blood pressure. Those at greatest risk are the people who believe they are doing most of the work.

A research team led by Dr Rebecca C. Thurston from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, tracked 113 unmedicated, hypertensive, male and female full-time workers and the number of hours they worked, the jobs they did in the home, and the responsibility they felt for the [housework](#). While much research has been done on the links between types of employment and conditions of work to raised blood pressure, almost no work had been done on links between housework

and health issues.

The subjects had their blood pressure checked over a three-week period and were then given a blood pressure monitor to wear for one day, both at home and at work. They were asked to provide information on the number of hours they spent on seven areas around the house: caring for children, pets, the ill/elderly, household chores (such as cleaning and cooking), house/car repairs or maintenance, yard work, and finances.

The results, published in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine* showed those who felt they were accepting most of the responsibility had the highest risk of having [high blood pressure](#). This was true regardless of how many hours they actually spent doing the chores, which suggests the raised blood pressure was probably mostly due to stress over the feeling of responsibility rather than from the jobs themselves.

There was also some difference between responsibilities for different chores, with household chores raising the blood pressure the most. Other chores raising blood pressure included budgeting and paying bills, and car maintenance. Looking after children had no effect, but looking after pets had more effect on men than women.

Affluence was also a factor, with people in poorer families more adversely affected than those in wealthier ones.

The researchers also said that the nature of housework, which can be repetitive, boring and presenting little challenge and few intrinsic rewards, could also be a factor in the elevation of [blood pressure](#).

**More information:** Household Responsibilities, Income, and Ambulatory Blood Pressure Among Working Men and Women, *Psychosom Med* 2011, [doi:10.1097/PSY.0b013e3182080e1a](https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0b013e3182080e1a)

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