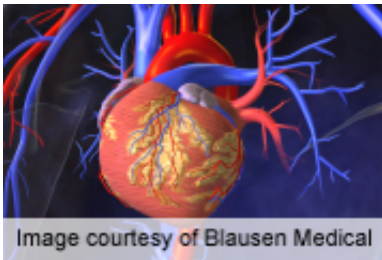


# High blood pressure may be especially lethal for blacks

April 10 2012

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It doubled odds for sudden cardiac death compared to whites, study finds.

(HealthDay) -- Black people with high blood pressure are twice as likely to suffer sudden cardiac death than whites or other racial groups who suffer hypertension, according to a new study.

Researchers found this was true regardless of blacks' other risk factors, such as age, gender, family history, weight, diabetes or pre-existing heart disease.

Researchers examined 533 black and 8,660 non-black patients with [high blood pressure](#) and followed them for five years. [Sudden cardiac death](#) occurred in 178 patients, including 17 blacks and 161 non-blacks. After adjusting for risk factors such as age, sex, [body mass index](#) (a measure of body fat based on height and weight), diabetes and history of heart disease, the study revealed black patients had a two-fold greater risk of sudden cardiac death.

In sudden cardiac death, the heart unexpectedly stops beating, causing blood flow to the brain and organs to stop. If blood flow isn't restored through CPR or defibrillation, death occurs within minutes.

The study appears in the April issue of *HeartRhythm*.

"The truly unique outcome of our study is the indication that black patients may be at a higher risk of [sudden cardiac death], but not because of other more well-known risk factors," study lead author Dr. Peter Okin, a professor of medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College and an attending physician at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, said in a journal news release.

While the study found an association between sudden cardiac death and high blood pressure, it did not prove a cause-and-effect relationship.

More research is needed to explore the genetic, structural and functional differences involved in the higher incidence of sudden [cardiac death](#) in black people with high blood pressure, the researchers said.

**More information:** The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute provides more information on [sudden cardiac arrest](#).

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