

Blacks and hypertension link persists across age and economic status

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African-Americans are at higher risk for developing hypertension than Whites or Mexican Americans, even if they've managed to avoid high blood pressure earlier in life.

A new study released in *Ethnicity & Disease* found that Blacks were 30 percent more likely to develop hypertension after the age of 50 when compared to Whites and Mexican Americans and they need to be made more aware of their risk.

“According to our findings, African American individuals and their health care providers should remain vigilant and engage in efforts to prevent hypertension even into old age,” said lead author Ana Quiñones, Ph.D., assistant professor in the department of public health and

preventive medicine at Oregon Health and Science University.

Quiñones and her colleagues used data from 9,259 adults aged 50 and older who participated in a Health and Retirement Study and reported having no hypertension at the start of study. Over an 11-year period, 51 percent of the Black people studied were diagnosed with hypertension compared to 43 percent of Whites and 42 percent of Mexicans. In fact, Blacks were more likely than Whites or Mexicans to develop high blood pressure even when factoring in smoking status, body mass index, socioeconomic status and the presence of chronic disease.

Hypertension is the most common form of cardiovascular disease in the United States and a significant contributor to heart disease and stroke. Overall, 25 percent of adults over the age of 18 were told in 2010 that they had hypertension, according to a national survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Thomas A. LaVeist, Ph.D., director of the Hopkins Center for Health Disparities Solutions at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said that health education is one of the most important things to do to prevent hypertension among Blacks of all ages.

“The higher rate of hypertension is pretty widely known among [African Americans](#),” he said. “However, that fact is often presented within a narrative suggesting that this is some how inheritable through genetics. It is more likely that what is passed from generation to generation are the health behaviors that produce hypertension. It should also be stressed that [hypertension](#) is completely reversible and if you are African American, you are not necessarily fated to be hypertensive.”

More information: Quiñones AR, Liang J, et al. (2012). Racial and ethnic differences in hypertension risk: new diagnoses after age 50. *Ethnicity & Disease*, Vol. 22, Spring.

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