

Black men raised by single parent prone to high blood pressure

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Poverty might help explain the finding, researchers say.

(HealthDay)—Black men who were raised in single-parent households have higher blood pressure than those who spent at least part of their childhood in a two-parent home, according to a new study.

This is the first study to link childhood family living arrangements with blood pressure in black men in the United States, who tend to have higher rates of high blood pressure than American men of other races. The findings suggest that programs to promote family stability during childhood might have a long-lasting effect on the risk of high blood pressure in these men.

In the study, which was funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, researchers analyzed data on more than 500 [black men](#) in Washington, D.C., who were taking part in a long-term Howard University family study.

The researchers adjusted for factors associated with blood pressure, such as age, exercise, smoking, weight and medical history. After doing so, they found that [men](#) who lived in a two-parent household for one or more years of their childhood had a 4.4 mm Hg lower [systolic blood pressure](#) (the top number in a blood pressure reading) than those who spent their entire childhood in a single-parent home.

Men who spent one to 12 years of their [childhood](#) in a two-parent home had an average 6.5 mm Hg lower systolic blood pressure and a 46 percent lower risk of being diagnosed with [high blood pressure](#), according to the study, which was published Dec. 2 in the journal *Hypertension*.

"Living with both parents in early life may identify a critical period in human development where a nurturing socio-familial environment can have profound, long-lasting influences on blood pressure," said study leader Debbie Barrington, an assistant professor of epidemiology at Columbia University in New York City.

Although the study found an association between a single-parent upbringing and a higher risk for high [blood pressure](#), it did not prove a cause-and-effect link.

Barrington and her team noted that poverty may play a role in the findings, as well. Black children who live with their mothers are three times more likely to be poor, the researchers said. Those who live with their fathers or a non-parent are twice as likely to be poor. Children who are not raised by both parents also are much less likely to find and keep steady employment as young adults.

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute explains how to [prevent high blood pressure](#).

[Abstract](#)

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