



Hypertension in African Americans

By Monica Li

High blood pressure or hypertension is a fairly common condition in which there is excessive pressure against the artery walls, ultimately putting the body's blood vessels and organs at risk. In considering the negative health impacts of discrimination, multiple research groups investigate the relationship between discrimination against African Americans and any potential influence it may have on the frequency of hypertension for Black people. In recent years, researchers have employed ambulatory blood pressure (ABP) monitoring in these studies since it provides a more comprehensive assessment of an individual's body than other methods, and can better predict health outcomes (Brondolo et al, 2011).

The scientific research and empirical reviews point to one common finding: interpersonal discrimination is associated with higher ABP even after adjusting for varied demographic, health, and sex-related factors (Forde et al., 2020). Since increased discrimination is associated with higher ABP and ABP is an indicator and contributor of hypertension, the data suggest that discrimination generates vulnerability to organ damage and heart disease in African Americans. This finding fits well into the reality of African American adults who experience disproportionately more hypertension than those from other racial groups (Lee et al., 2017). As interpersonal and institutional racism persist, African Americans are forced to contend with physical consequences to racially discriminatory conditions.

Sources

Brondolo, E., Love, E. E., Pencille, M., Schoenthaler, A., & Ogedegbe, G. (2011). Racism and hypertension: A review of the empirical evidence and implications for clinical practice. *American Journal of Hypertension*, 24(5), 518–529. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ajh.2011.9>

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