

## Fast Facts

# 5 Things You May Not Know About Women and Hypertension

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is the leading risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Nearly half of all hypertensive patients are female, but the signs, symptoms and management of the disease may differ depending on the woman's stage of life.



It is important to recognize how hypertension affects women.



### **Blood pressure starts rising earlier and advances faster in women compared to men.**

More than 44% of women have high blood pressure, and fewer than one in four have it under control.<sup>1</sup> Hormonal changes from pregnancy, birth control and menopause can impact hypertension's signs and symptoms in women.



### **For young and middle-aged women, hypertension is often symptomatic.**

For young and middle-aged women experiencing hypertension, chest pain, as well as pain radiating from the jaw and chest, are symptoms. In most elderly women, hypertension causes few symptoms, or none at all. Women have also reported palpitations, fatigue and sleep deprivation from high blood pressure.<sup>2</sup>



### **Hypertension can be dangerous for pregnant mothers and babies in utero.**

For mothers, high blood pressure can increase the risk of blood clotting problems, liver problems and temporary kidney failure. High blood pressure can also prevent the placenta from receiving enough blood and nutrients, resulting in low birth weight, premature birth and the need for early labor induction. Preeclampsia, a common high blood pressure disorder that occurs during the second half of pregnancy, can pose major health risks for both the mother and the baby.<sup>3</sup>



## 4 Menopause can increase the risk for high blood pressure.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in postmenopausal women, with fluctuations of estrogen playing a key role in blood pressure irregularities. Menopausal hormone changes, increased weight gain and hormone therapies may also increase blood pressure.<sup>4</sup> Women who reach menopause before the age of 45 have a higher chance of developing heart disease.<sup>5</sup>



## 5 Women can take steps to prevent, diagnose and treat hypertensive disorders.

Lifestyle changes such as diet, exercise and stress management can help prevent hypertensive disorders. It is also essential to identify risk factors and symptoms to ensure women receive a timely diagnosis and proper treatment plan, especially after a high-risk pregnancy or following menopausal complications.



## Hypertension is a major risk factor for women throughout their life stages.

Greater understanding of hypertension in women is needed to refine diagnosis and better treat hypertensive disorders.



1. Kaiser Permanente. "High Blood Pressure in Women." Kaiser Permanente, <https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/health-wellness/healtharticle/high-blood-pressure-in-women>.
2. European Society of Cardiology. "Hypertension in Women: No Silent Lady Killer." E-Journal of Cardiology Practice, <https://www.escardio.org/Journals/E-Journal-of-Cardiology-Practice/Volume-17/hypertension-in-women-no-silent-lady-killer>.
3. Mayo Clinic Staff. "Preeclampsia." Mayo Clinic, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/preeclampsia/symptoms-causes/syc-20355745>.
4. Mayo Clinic Staff. "Menopause and High Blood Pressure: Is There a Connection?" Mayo Clinic, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/expert-answers/menopause-and-high-blood-pressure/faq-20058406>.
5. Kaiser Permanente. "High Blood Pressure in Women." Kaiser Permanente, <https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/health-wellness/healtharticle/high-blood-pressure-in-women>.