

## Hypertension: Common Myths and Facts

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World Hypertension Day is observed on 17 May each year. We write this editorial to highlight some of the common myths regarding hypertension which affects control of hypertension. Hypertension (high blood pressure) is often called “the silent killer” because it typically causes no symptoms while quietly damaging your heart and arteries. Dispelling common myths about this lifelong condition is crucial for proper treatment, prevention, and long-term heart health. There are myths about symptoms and diagnosis, causes and lifestyle and treatment / management of hypertension.

### Symptoms & Diagnosis 1

- **Myth:** You can feel when your blood pressure is high (e.g., sweating, nervousness, or a headache).
- **Fact:** High blood pressure rarely causes noticeable symptoms. The only way to know your exact numbers is to have it measured regularly.
- **Myth:** Normal blood pressure should always be 120/80 mmHg.
- **Fact:** While 120/80 mmHg is the ideal target for many, a healthy range depends on your overall health. High blood pressure is clinically defined as any reading over 130/80 mmHg.
- **Myth:** Blood pressure only needs to be monitored by a doctor during an annual visit.
- **Fact:** Blood pressure fluctuates throughout the day. Home monitoring provides your healthcare provider with valuable, real-world data to see if your treatment plan is actually working.

### Causes & Lifestyle

- **Myth:** If you do not add table salt to your food, your sodium intake is fine.
- **Fact:** More than 75% of the sodium we consume comes from processed, pre-packaged, and restaurant foods—not the saltshaker. You need to read Nutrition Facts labels to monitor your intake.

- **Myth:** Switching to sea salt or kosher salt prevents blood pressure spikes.
- **Fact:** Sea salt and kosher salt have the exact same amount of sodium by weight as regular table salt.
- **Myth:** High blood pressure only affects older, overweight men.
- **Fact:** Hypertension can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, or body type. While it is more common in older adults, young adults and children can also suffer from it. Furthermore, women are just as susceptible as men, with post-menopausal women being at an even higher risk.

### Treatment & Management

- **Myth:** If you have a family history of hypertension, there is nothing you can do to prevent it.
- **Fact:** While genetics play a big role, adopting a heart-healthy diet, exercising, managing weight, and limiting alcohol can help many people avoid high blood pressure completely.
- **Myth:** Once blood pressure is controlled with medication, you can stop taking the pills.
- **Fact:** Hypertension is typically a lifelong condition. Medication controls high blood pressure but stopping the medication without consulting a doctor will likely cause your numbers to spike right back up.
- **Myth:** Taking blood pressure medication means you do not need to exercise or watch your diet.
- **Fact:** Lifestyle changes are the absolute foundation of heart health. Doctors only prescribe medication because lifestyle changes alone weren't enough to reduce your risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Arterial hypertension is one of the most underestimated diseases. At the same time various myths are frequently associated with this illness. Likewise, the overload of available clinical data causes misconceptions, which then lead to the misinterpretation of real and doubtful issues. Unfortunately, these misconceptions result in insufficient

blood pressure control. So. we should break this myth by educating people including patients.<sup>2</sup>

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