



Pam White
Health Net

The Consequence of High Blood Pressure

Vision impairment

High blood pressure can cause the walls of blood vessels in the back of the eyes to thicken. These vessels may lose their elasticity and eventually leak blood, which can result in vision impairment or blindness.

Stroke

During a stroke, blood flow to part of the brain stops. Strokes can be caused by raised pressure in the arteries, which may result in a blood clot or ruptured artery in the brain. High blood pressure is the most serious controllable risk factor for strokes – approximately 70% of stroke victims have high blood pressure. A person's risk of stroke is directly related to his or her blood pressure.



High blood pressure is the most serious controllable risk factor for strokes

Heart attack

A heart attack occurs when blood flow through a coronary artery is interrupted. Damage or death of part of the heart muscle may result. Cholesterol buildup in coronary arteries is the most common cause of heart attacks. The buildup can rupture or tear, which may cause a blood clot to form and obstruct the artery. High blood pressure can lead to a heart attack because it promotes

cholesterol buildup in coronary arteries. The portion of a heart damaged in a heart attack appears as a bloodless, discolored area.

Premature delivery

High blood pressure can cause the placenta to separate from the mother's uterine wall before she gives birth. It can also constrict blood vessels in a mother's uterus and affect the amount of nutrients and oxygen that her baby receives. Premature delivery and low birthweight may result. Babies born prematurely often have respiratory problems and may have difficulty regulating their body temperature.

Kidney damage

The kidneys need an adequate amount of blood to filter wastes from the body. High blood pressure can thicken and constrict the arteries that supply blood to the kidneys. Severe kidney disease may result, giving the kidneys a scarred, wrinkled appearance. In the early stages, these kidney abnormalities may produce few symptoms. However, kidney failure may eventually occur, making dialysis or a kidney transplant necessary for survival.

(continued)

Source: 2002 Health Edco.® This information highlights only a few of the many conditions associated with obesity.

CORP84418 (8/11) In Arizona, Health Net of Arizona, Inc. underwrites benefits for HMO plans, and Health Net Life Insurance Company underwrites benefits for indemnity plans and life insurance coverage. Health Net of Arizona, Inc., Health Net of California, Inc., Health Net Health Plan of Oregon, Inc. and Health Net Life Insurance Company are subsidiaries of Health Net, Inc. Health Net is a registered service mark of Health Net, Inc. All rights reserved.

Enlarged heart

Hardening of the coronary arteries can force the heart to work harder to pump blood throughout the body. Thickening of the walls of the heart muscle can occur and lead to an enlarged heart. Although increased thickness of the heart may elevate the risk of heart failure, controlling high blood pressure can help to prevent this condition.

Artery damage

High blood pressure can lead to artery damage. Atherosclerosis occurs when artery walls slowly fill with yellow patches of cholesterol. Arteriosclerosis – or hardening of the arteries – may also result and worsen high blood pressure. Artery damage can begin in childhood and may eventually cause a heart attack or stroke.

Aneurysm

An aneurysm is a permanent “ballooning” of a blood vessel that results in the formation of a blood-filled sac. While aneurysms can occur in any of the body’s blood vessels, they most frequently develop in the aorta. High blood pressure increases the risk of an aneurysm by promoting cholesterol buildup that can weaken blood vessels.