



# A global brief on HYPERTENSION

Silent killer, global public health crisis

World Health Day 2013



World Health  
Organization

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**Design and layout:** MEO design – communication – web, Switzerland

**Photos:** p. 14: WHO/Jim Holmes; p. 19: WHO/C. Black; p. 20: WHO/C. Black; p. 31: WHO/Harold Ruiz; p. 33: WHO; p.36: WHO/S. Hollyman

**Printed by:** WHO

**Document number:** WHO/DCO/WHO/2013.2

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## **A GLOBAL BRIEF ON HYPERTENSION**

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# FOREWORD

We live in a rapidly changing environment. Throughout the world, human health is being shaped by the same powerful forces: demographic ageing, rapid urbanization, and the globalization of unhealthy lifestyles. Increasingly, wealthy and resource-constrained countries are facing the same health issues. One of the most striking examples of this shift is the fact that noncommunicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung diseases have overtaken infectious diseases as the world's leading cause of mortality.

One of the key risk factors for cardiovascular disease is hypertension - or raised blood pressure. Hypertension already affects one billion people worldwide, leading to heart attacks and strokes. Researchers have estimated that raised blood pressure currently kills nine million people every year.

But this risk does not need to be so high. Hypertension can be prevented. Doing so is far less costly, and far safer for patients, than interventions like cardiac bypass surgery and dialysis that may be needed when hypertension is missed and goes untreated.

Global efforts to tackle the challenge of noncommunicable diseases have gained momentum since the 2011 United Nations Political Declaration on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. The World Health Organization is developing a Global Plan of Action, for 2013-2020, to provide a roadmap for country-led action for prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. WHO's Member States are reaching consensus on a global monitoring framework to track progress in preventing and controlling these diseases and their key risk factors. One of the targets envisaged is a substantial reduction in the number of people with raised blood pressure.

Hypertension is a silent, invisible killer that rarely causes symptoms. Increasing public awareness is key, as is access to early detection. Raised blood pressure is a serious warning sign that significant lifestyle changes are urgently needed. People need to know why raised blood pressure is dangerous, and how to take steps to control it. They need to know that raised blood pressure and other risk factors such as diabetes often appear together. To raise this kind of awareness, countries need systems and services in place to promote universal health coverage and support healthy lifestyles: eating a balanced diet, reducing salt intake, avoiding harmful use of alcohol, getting regular exercise and shunning tobacco. Access to good quality medicines, which are effective and inexpensive, is also vital, particularly at the primary care level. As with other noncommunicable diseases, awareness aids early detection while self-care helps ensure regular intake of medication, healthy behaviours and better control of the condition.

High-income countries have begun to reduce hypertension in their populations through strong public health policies such as reduction of salt in processed food and widely available diagnosis and treatment that tackle hypertension and other risk factors together. Many can point to examples of joint action – across sectors – that is effectively addressing risk factors for raised blood pressure. In contrast, many developing countries are seeing growing numbers of people who suffer from heart attacks and strokes due to undiagnosed and uncontrolled risk factors such as hypertension.

This new WHO global brief on hypertension aims to contribute to the efforts of all Member States to develop and implement policies to reduce death and disability from noncommunicable diseases. Prevention and control of raised blood pressure is one of the cornerstones of these efforts.



**Dr Margaret Chan**

*Director-General  
World Health Organization*





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Hypertension, also known as high or raised blood pressure, is a global public health issue.**

It contributes to the burden of heart disease, stroke and kidney failure and premature mortality and disability. It disproportionately affects populations in low- and middle-income countries where health systems are weak.

Hypertension rarely causes symptoms in the early stages and many people go undiagnosed. Those who are diagnosed may not have access to treatment and may not be able to successfully control their illness over the long term.

There are significant health and economic gains attached to early detection, adequate treatment and good control of hypertension. Treating the complications of hypertension entails costly interventions such as cardiac bypass surgery, carotid artery surgery and dialysis, draining individual and government budgets.

Addressing behavioural risk factors, e.g. unhealthy diet, harmful use of alcohol and physical inactivity, can prevent hypertension. Tobacco use increases the risk of complications of hypertension. If no action is taken to reduce exposure to these factors, cardiovascular disease incidence, including hypertension, will increase.

Salt reduction initiatives can make a major contribution to prevention and control of high blood pressure. However, vertical programmes focusing on hypertension control alone are not cost effective.

Integrated noncommunicable disease programmes implemented through a primary health care approach are an affordable and sustainable way for countries to tackle hypertension.

Prevention and control of hypertension is complex, and demands multi-stakeholder collaboration, including governments, civil society, academia and the food and beverage industry. In view of the enormous public health benefits of blood pressure control, now is the time for concerted action.



SECTION I

# Why hypertension

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

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