

The background is a dark, textured illustration of several people sitting around a table, engaged in a game of dominoes. The style is reminiscent of a woodcut or a heavily textured print. The people are shown in profile or three-quarter view, focused on their game. The overall tone is dark and moody, with a focus on the social and cultural aspects of the scene.

Hypertension in the African and Afro Caribbean population

M Y N E W S E L F



Higher risk

People of African and Afro Caribbean heritage, who make up almost 3% of the UK's population have a much higher risk of hypertension (high blood pressure) than other sections of the population.

The reasons for this are unclear but some evidence suggests genes, other studies blame socio-economic circumstances, but one thing is clear; Black people of African and Afro Caribbean descent living in the UK are three to four times more likely to have hypertension compared to white populations in the UK.

Hypertension can cause serious problems if you are Black. You are twice as likely to die from stroke, have an increased risk of Type 2 diabetes and end-stage kidney failure compared to the white population.

What causes hypertension?

Lifestyle plays a part in raising blood pressure, for example, eating too much salt, being overweight and limited physical activity. Some traditional African and Caribbean foods tend to be high in salt and saturated fat which will have an effect.

Your genes matter too, as you're more likely to develop high blood pressure if other people in your family have high blood pressure or have done in the past.

Blood Pressure Stages

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic mm Hg (upper#)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower#)
Low blood pressure (Hypotension)	less than 80	or	less than 60
Normal	80-120	and	60-80
Prehypertension	120-139	or	80-89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension Stage 1)	140-159	or	90-99
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension Stage 2)	160 or higher	or	100 or higher
High Blood Pressure Crisis (Seek Emergency Care)	higher than 180	or	higher than 110

Managing the risks

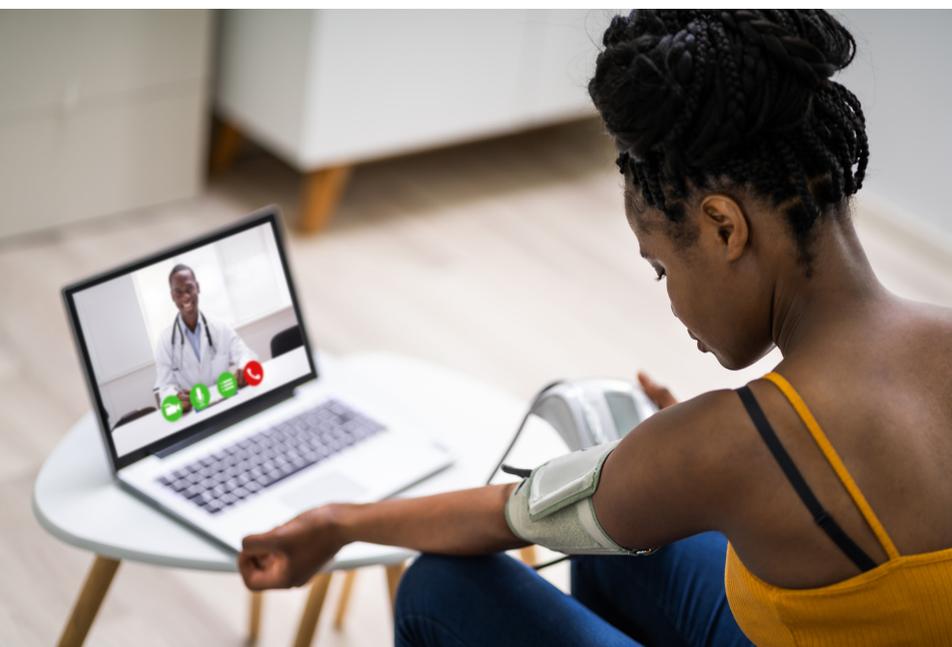
High salt intake is a contributory factor to hypertension, although the UK population as a whole consumes far too much salt, there is some evidence to suggest that African and Afro Caribbean people are more sensitive to its effects.

Diet and lifestyle can be controlled and you can manage risks by:

- Reducing salt intake - add less to food, cut out processed foods that usually contain more salt, avoid salted meat, salted fish and brined or cured foods.
- Keeping to a healthy weight - obesity increases your risk of hypertension.
- Avoiding fats like palm and coconut oils, which are very high in saturated fat, and use olive oil, or rapeseed oils instead.
- Not smoking or drinking too much alcohol
- Taking prescribed medications
- Exercising - even a 20 minute walk every day will help.

These actions can help reduce the risks, but there is another thing you can do to take control of your blood pressure, and not let it control you.

You can be proactive and get a home blood pressure monitor.



Benefits of a home blood pressure monitor

COVID-19 has made visiting GP surgeries harder, so a home blood pressure monitor is a sensible investment, particularly if you are in a higher risk group. Many doctors now advise their patients to invest in this simple piece of kit, now widely available. At Dorset Cardiologist Practice, we endorse this advice.

You'll be able to check your blood pressure as often as you need to, without waiting for an appointment, and monitor how well any lifestyle changes are helping to make a difference. If you see a consistent rise in your blood pressure, you can alert your doctor immediately.

There is excellent advice on the British Heart Foundation and Blood Pressure UK websites (see links below) on how to take a blood pressure reading, and what kind of monitor to buy. They also include helpful advice on lifestyle changes.

If your background puts you at more risk of hypertension, please consider buying a blood pressure monitor. For a small outlay now, you could save yourself a lot more in the long-term.

[British Heart Foundation – Manage Your Blood Pressure at Home](#)

[Blood Pressure UK – Monitoring Your Blood Pressure at Home](#)



Dr Edney Boston-Griffiths MB BS MD MRCP

How My New Self can help

Managing one serious condition is challenging, but dealing with two can be overwhelming. Many people will feel isolated and overwhelmed. Everyone is different and will respond to treatments in different ways. It's easy to become discouraged if, for example, you find it hard to lose weight quickly.

At Dorset Cardiology Practice our consultant cardiologist and interventionist, Dr Edney Boston-Griffiths has over 10+ years of training and clinical experience in the field of interventional cardiology, which has driven his focus on coronary risk and prevention – encouraging holistic physical and mental wellbeing – as well as treatment.

My New Self will offer alternative therapies that have a strong evidence base to show that they improve heart health, alongside our clinical services. We're combining the best of both, to suit the individual and support them to lead healthier and happier lives.

Please stay in touch or contact us if you would like to find out more.



The Dorset Cardiology Practice

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