

# Does Tension Cause Hypertension?

Does everyone at work have a say in how your job is done—except you? Does getting stuck in traffic make you boil over along with your radiator? Do you regularly get hot under the collar over things that other people just shrug off? If so, you're a candidate for one of the latest medical discoveries: stress-induced hypertension.

## What Is Hypertension?

Hypertension is high blood pressure, and it's bad news. High blood pressure damages your heart, other organs and blood vessels without your even knowing it's there. But what's it got to do with stress?

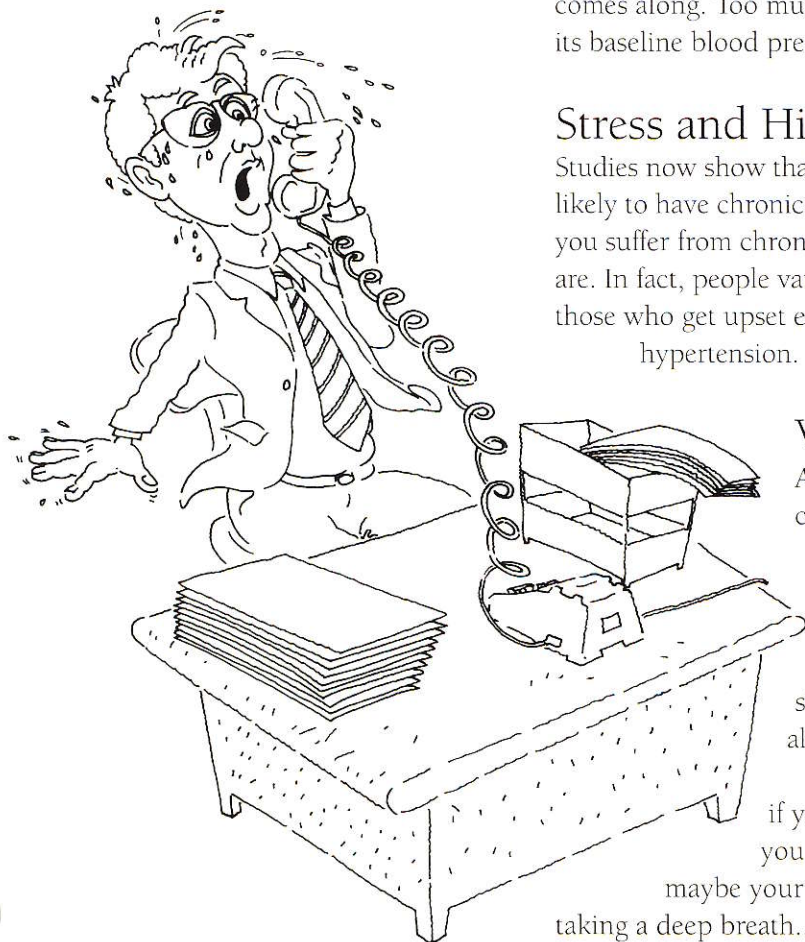
## The Stress Reaction

When you're under stress, your body starts an ancient reaction designed to help you get out of danger. It shoots your blood up with adrenaline, which

raises your blood pressure, blood sugar and heart rate and increases your muscle tone—just what you need to fight off a wild animal. But in the case of everyday stress, there's nothing to fight or to run away from. The adrenaline rush leaves you all revved up with no place to go. Blood pressure drops slowly until the next aggravation comes along. Too much of this, and the body gives up and boosts its baseline blood pressure to a permanently higher level.

## Stress and High Blood Pressure


Studies now show that people who experience chronic stress are more likely to have chronically high blood pressure. How do you know if you suffer from chronic stress? It's simple: If you feel stressed out, you are. In fact, people vary widely in their reaction to stress. That's why those who get upset easily are more likely to have stress-induced hypertension.



## What You Can Do

A feeling of helplessness is one of the most common stressors in our society. But you don't have to be a helpless victim of stress-induced hypertension. Stress management programs can help you learn the fine art of relaxation. Techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and regular exercise can also help you let off steam safely.

Get your blood pressure checked. If it's high, or if you feel too much stress, ask your doctor where you can get into a stress-reduction program. Or maybe your workplace has a program. Start right now by taking a deep breath...

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