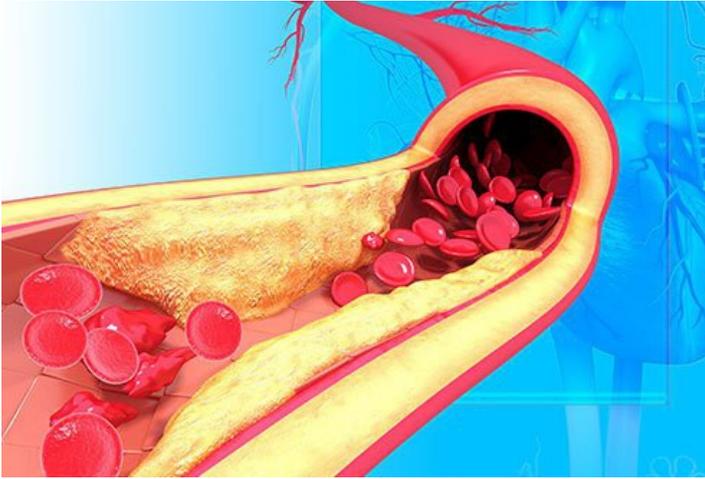
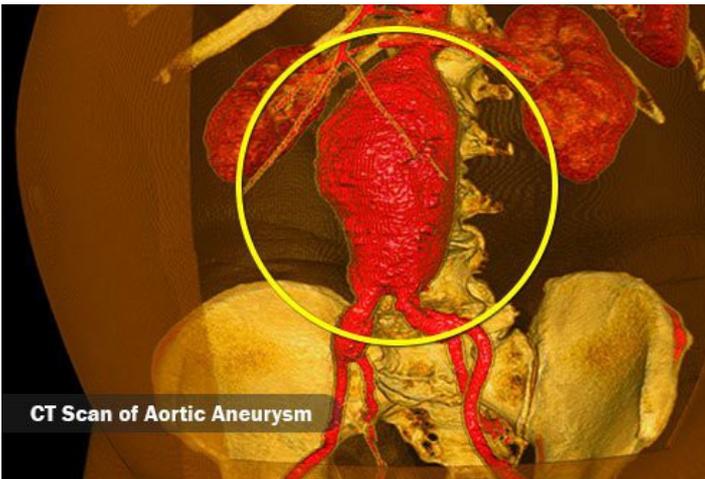


What High Blood Pressure Can Do to Your Body



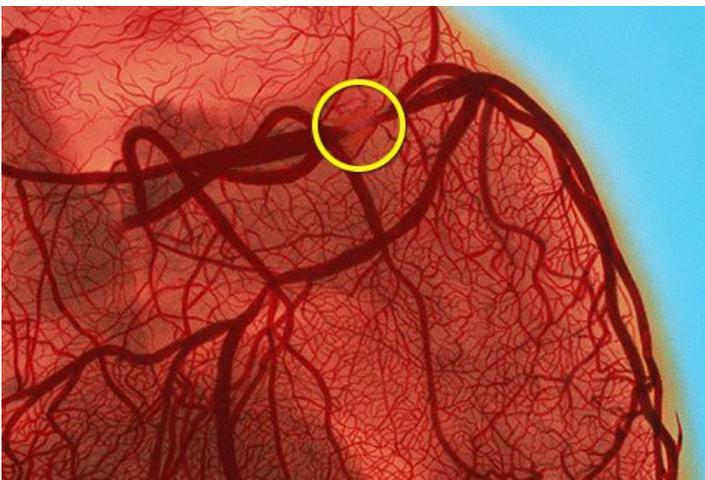
Artery Damage

Your arteries should be sturdy, springy, and smooth to move blood easily from your lungs and heart, where it gets oxygen, to your organs and other tissues. High blood pressure, or HBP, pushes too hard on your artery walls. This damages the inside and causes fat, or "plaque," to collect. That plaque makes your arteries more stiff and narrow, so they can't do their job as well.



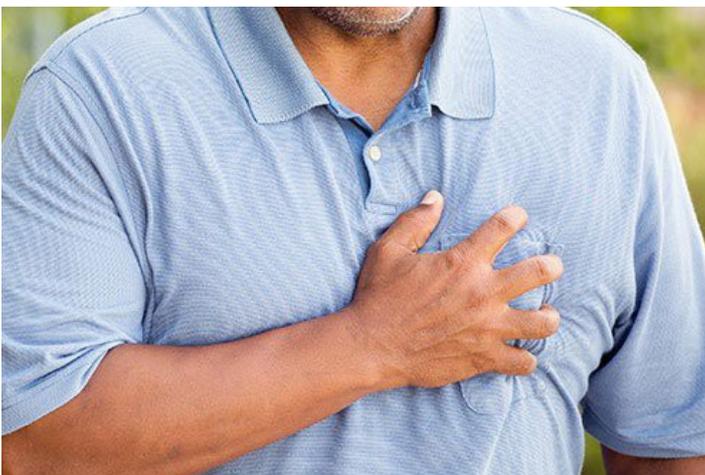
Aneurysm

It's when pressure pushes out a section of an artery wall and weakens it. If it breaks, it can bleed into your body, and that could be serious. It's possible in any artery, but an aneurysm is most common in your aorta, which runs down the middle of your body. If you have a damaged artery, you could get an aneurysm even if you don't have high blood pressure.



Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)

CAD happens when plaque builds up in arteries close to your heart. This slows blood flow, which can bring chest pain or a strange heart rhythm (called an arrhythmia). A total blockage can cause a heart attack.



Heart Attack

When enough plaque builds up, or a clump of it comes loose, to completely block an artery to your heart, it can cause a heart attack. The blockage starves the heart muscle of oxygen and nutrients. That can hurt or destroy it.

You usually feel pressure or pain in your chest, but sometimes in your arm, neck, or jaw too. It might be hard to breathe, and you could be dizzy or nauseated.

Call 911 if you have any of these warning signs.



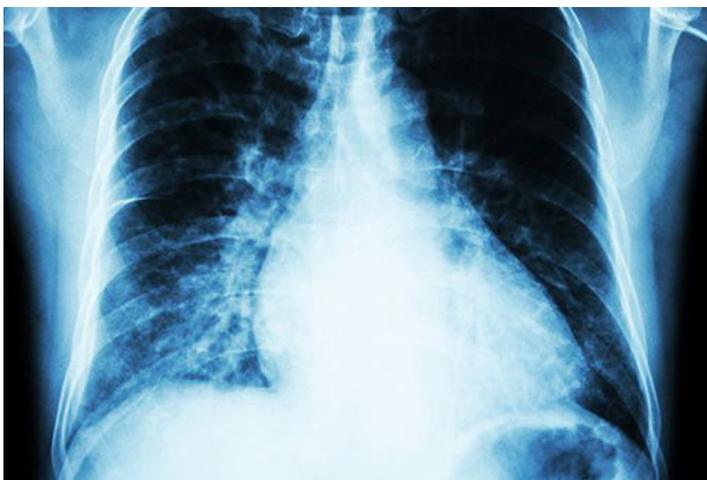
Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD)

PAD is like CAD, but it affects blood vessels farther from your heart, like those in your arms, legs, head, or stomach. You might have pain or cramps in your legs, often when you walk or climb stairs. It can also make you tired. The pain may go away when you rest and come back when you move. Left untreated, PAD could bring more serious problems like stroke, ulcers, and loss of circulation in your legs, which can cause amputation.



Heart Failure

High blood pressure can cause your arteries to narrow. Over time, that can make your heart work harder and get weaker. Eventually, it gets so weak that it can't supply enough blood to the rest of the body. This is heart failure.



Enlarged Heart

As it works harder to move blood around, the muscle of your heart thickens. As a result, your whole heart gets larger. The bigger it gets, the less able it is to do its job, which means your tissues might not get the oxygen and nutrients they need.



Stroke

High blood pressure is the top cause of stroke. There are two types:

- **Hemorrhagic:** A weakened artery bursts in the brain.
- **Ischemic:** A clump, or "clot," of plaque comes loose and blocks blood flow to brain cells.

Part of your brain starts to die when it doesn't get enough blood. This can hurt your ability to think, move, speak, and see. For symptoms, remember **FAST**:

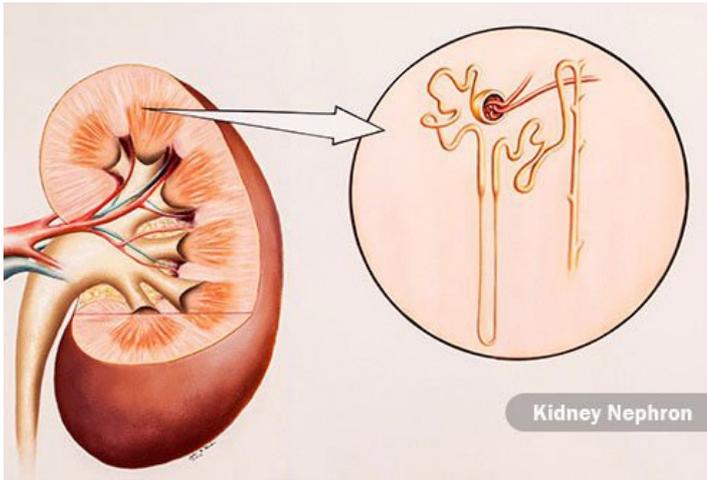
- **F**ace drooping?
- **A**rm weakness?
- **S**peech problems?
- **T**ime to call 911.



Dementia

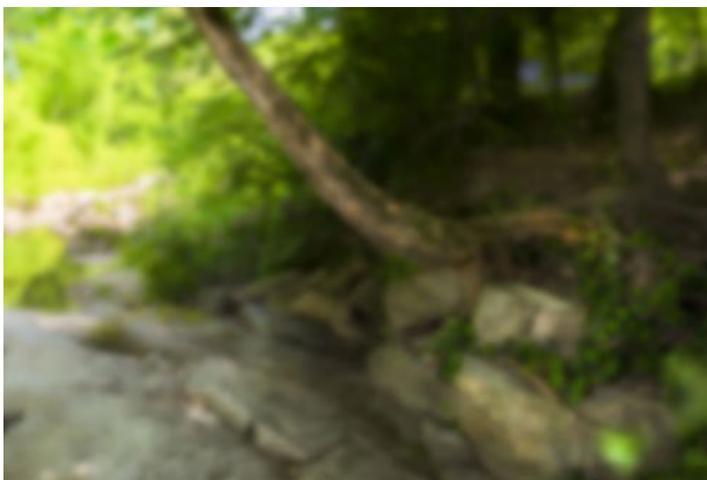
HBP can cause plaque buildup in arteries that supply your brain. The clogging of those arteries can slow the flow of blood to the rest of your body. When it changes the way your brain works, it's called "vascular dementia."

It might affect how well you think, speak, see, remember -- even the way you move. This usually happens slowly over time. But if you have a stroke, you could notice symptoms very quickly.



Kidney Failure

High blood pressure is the second-leading cause of kidney failure. It narrows and hardens the blood vessels your kidneys use to help get rid of waste and extra fluid. That keeps special filters, called nephrons, from getting enough blood and nutrients. That can eventually shut down your kidneys for good.



Eye Problems

Over time, high blood pressure can slow blood flow to the retina, the light-sensitive layer of tissue at the back of the eyeball. It can also slow the travel of blood to the optic nerve, which helps send signals to your brain. Either may blur your vision, or in some cases make it go away. HBP might also cause fluid to build under your retina. That could scar the tissue and distort your vision.



Sex Problems for Men

High blood pressure can slow down blood flow anywhere in the body. Without enough blood to your penis, you may have problems getting or keeping an erection. If you thought you were healthy, this may be a sign that you need to see your doctor to check your high blood pressure and rule out related health issues.



Sex Problems for Women

Your body may respond differently because of less blood flow to your vagina, both before and during sex. You might not be as aroused when you want to be, and it could be harder to climax. High blood pressure can also make you more tired. It can ease your sex drive, too.



Bone Loss

People with high blood pressure often have more calcium in their urine. It may be that HBP causes your body to get rid of too much of this mineral that's so important to strong bones. This can lead to breaks or fractures, especially in older women.



Sleep Apnea

This makes your throat muscles relax too much and stops your breathing briefly, but repeatedly, as you sleep. High blood pressure seems to cause sleep apnea, which in turn appears to raise blood pressure. Work with your doctor to treat both conditions as soon as you can. It may prevent other health problems.

Source: https://www.medicinenet.com/high_blood_pressure_hypertension_body/article.htm

Reviewed by James Beckerman, MD, FACC on Friday, May 25, 2018

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