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Common Causes of Hypertension in Senior Adults

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Common Causes of Hypertension in Senior Adults

Research has indicated that blood vessels naturally 'harden' with age, losing their elasticity. This may be one explanation for why older people are more at risk of developing high blood pressure. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is unlike low blood pressure in that it rarely has any noticeable symptoms. However, it often causes long-term health problems if undetected [1].

How Prevalent is Hypertension?

Blood pressure never settles into a regular pattern; it will often fluctuate marginally throughout life. When it begins to rise to dangerous levels, it should be treated. According to CDC reports, over 75 million Americans have high blood pressure but only 54% of these (including senior adults) have it under control. However, there has been an increase in those over the age of 60 that are aware of their condition since 1999. Many health conditions are associated with high blood pressure, including heart disease and stroke [2].

Obesity

Studies show that the increase in body mass index as well as the increase in age are linked to rising blood pressure and can lead to hypertension. Statistics from the Journal of American Medicine show that, in 2017, 37% of Americans over 60 years old are classified as obese [3]. Aside from high blood pressure, obesity is linked to many other health issues such as high cholesterol, heart disease and stroke, all of which have links to high blood pressure.

Diabetes

Diabetes is often linked to obesity and is also a contributor to the development of high blood pressure in elderly people [4]. Poor diet and high sugar intake can aid the development of diabetes and the incidence of the disease increases with age among American older adults according to statistics. This can

lead to further issues. Such as heart disease. A 2007 review in the Postgraduate Medical Journal shows that older individuals with systolic hypertension are at greater risk of mortality due to heart disease [5].

Kidney disease

Statistics from the National Kidney Foundation show that kidney disease is the leading cause of high blood pressure, just behind diabetes. There is some speculation on whether high blood pressure causes kidney disease or the other way around. High blood pressure leads to narrowed, weakened and hardened arteries which cannot deliver blood efficiently to the kidneys [6,7].

Alternatively, kidney disease can damage the blood vessels of the kidneys which cannot then remove waste appropriately. This can lead to pressure on the arteries leading to hypertension. Development of these conditions can cause blood pressure to rise, but this can also exacerbate existing conditions. Maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle lowers the risk of developing hypertension in elderly people.

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