High Blood Pressure Rates Rise in Children, Teens

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The prevalence of high blood pressure among children and adolescents rose during the late 1980s and into the early 2000s despite a downward trend that prevailed during much of the prior 30 years, according to the results of national surveys conducted during 1963-2002. From 1988 to 2002, the prevalence of high blood pressure (HBP) in children and adolescents aged 8-17 years increased from 2.7% to 3.7%. During the same period, the prevalence of pre-HBP increased from 7.7% to 10% and rose significantly among blacks and Mexican Americans. Dr. Rebecca Dzietach and her associates at Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta, reported.

“It is advisable to measure blood pressure at every visit with the appropriate technique to rank the child’s measured blood pressure from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention growth charts and the gender-, age-, and height-specific blood pressure table,” the researchers advised (Circulation 2007;116:1392-1400).


The overall trend of systolic and diastolic BP in the surveys paralleled the rise in HBP, although the mean increase in age-adjusted BP was greater for diastolic (8.4 mm Hg) than systolic BP (1.3 mm Hg). The increase in systolic BP was comparable among lean, at-risk-for- overweight, and overweight children and adolescents, but lean individuals had a significantly greater mean increase in diastolic BP than did their heavier counterparts.