



Improved management of hypertension could save 420,000 lives each year in the Americas, PAHO Director says

Strengthening primary health care services, as well as policies to reduce salt and promote healthy diet and physical activity are key to addressing the risk factors for the biggest killer in the Region.



Washington, DC, 11 May, 2023 (PAHO) – In the run-up to World Hypertension Day (17 May), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director, Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, has urged countries to intensify efforts to improve the management of hypertension, a measure that could save around 420,000 lives in the Americas each year.

While hypertension affects 180 million people in the Region (18% of adults) it “often has absolutely no symptoms nor signs and is therefore frequently undiagnosed and untreated,” Dr. Barbosa said during a media briefing today.

“This is serious because undiagnosed and uncontrolled hypertension can lead to heart attack, heart failure or stroke,” he added.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is the primary risk factor for cardiovascular disease, which is the main cause of premature death in the Region, responsible for around 2 million lives lost each year.

Yet in the Americas over one-third of men and a quarter of women with hypertension (aged 30 to 79 years) are unaware they have the condition. And of those who are aware they have hypertension and receive treatment, only a third (36%) have it under control.

The PAHO Director highlighted that countries must “intensify the scale-up and ensure equitable access to care for hypertension,” and provide training to ensure the latest approaches for diagnosis and treatment are practiced in primary health clinics across the Americas.

These include the [PAHO HEARTS initiative](#), a model of care for cardiovascular risk management, which is currently being implemented in around 3000 clinics across the Region.

The Director also urged countries to implement interventions to promote healthy diets, such as front-of-package warning labels on processed and ultra-processed food products, and measures to reduce salt intake.

Ensuring that primary health care clinics have clinically validated blood pressure measurement devices, is also key to accurately diagnose and manage hypertension, Dr. Barbosa added. Yet many lack this vital equipment.

Countries can access these devices, as well as quality-assured antihypertensive medications at competitive prices via the PAHO Strategic Fund, a pooled procurement mechanism for essential medicines and health technologies.

Lifestyle changes and lifelong use of antihypertensive medications are also key to reducing and controlling the condition.

World Hypertension Day is observed on 17 May each year to raise awareness of the urgent need to promote the prevention, detection and control of hypertension. The theme this year is Measure your blood pressure accurately, Control it, Live Longer.

Links

Video - [Press conference \(English\)](#)

Video - [Press conference \(Original\)](#)

[Factsheet - World Hypertension Day 2023](#)

[Hearts in the Americas](#)

[PAHO - Hypertension](#)

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.