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Introduction: The Evolving Definition and Classification of Hypertension

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Unlike the last official guidelines from Europe and Britain that continued the prior definitions and classifications of hypertension, the U.S. Joint National Joint Committee introduced "prehypertension" for those with blood pressures between 120/80 and 140/90 mmHg. The wisdom of this new terminology is unquestionable.

However, both U.S. and Canadian experts have more recently recommended that the basic definition of hypertension be changed to include patients with blood pressure below 140/90 who have other risk factors for premature cardiovascular disease. Although most experts agree that lower levels, i.e. 130/80, be used as the threshold for therapy for patients with diabetes or chronic renal disease (with little evidence), the broadening of the definition does not seem appropriate.