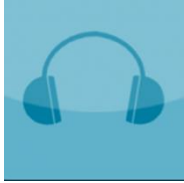


High Blood Pressure – Know Your Numbers!

High blood pressure is the biggest known cause of disability and premature death in the UK through stroke, heart attack and heart disease. One in three adults in the UK has high blood pressure and every day 350 people have a preventable stroke or heart attack caused by the condition.

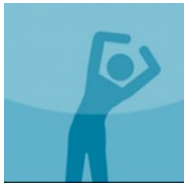


What is blood pressure?

When your heart beats, it pumps blood round your body to give it the energy and oxygen it needs. As the blood moves it pushes against the sides of the blood vessels. The strength of this pushing is your blood pressure. Blood pressure is not usually something that you feel or notice. The only way to know what your blood pressure is, is to have it measured. Blood pressure is measured in 'millimeters of mercury' (mmHg). When your blood pressure is measured it will be written as two numbers. For example, if your reading is 120/80mmHg, your blood pressure is '120 over 80'.

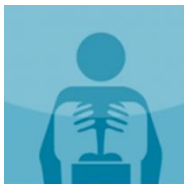
The table below shows what different readings can mean:

Blood Pressure Reading	What this means	What you need to do
Less than 120 over 80	Your blood pressure is normal and healthy.	Follow a healthy lifestyle to keep your blood pressure at this level.
Between 121 over 81 and 139/89	Your blood pressure is a little higher than it should be and you should try to lower it.	Make healthy changes to your lifestyle.
140 over 90 or higher (over a number of weeks)	You have high blood pressure	Change your lifestyle, see your own doctor and take any medication that they may give you.



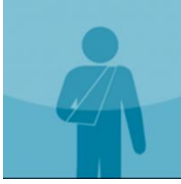
What is high blood pressure?

If your reading is consistently 140 over 90, or higher, over a number of weeks you probably have high blood pressure. Your blood pressure may also be high if just one of the numbers is higher than it should be. High blood pressure usually has no signs or symptoms, so the only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have yours measured. However, a single high reading does not necessarily mean you have high blood pressure. Many things can affect your blood pressure through the day, so you will need to see that it stays high over time.



Why is high blood pressure important?

If your blood pressure is too high, it puts extra strain on your heart and blood vessels. Over time, this extra strain can damage your body's organs, which puts you at risk of health problems. If you have high blood pressure and do not control it, this raises your risk of a heart attack or stroke. High blood pressure can also cause heart and kidney disease, and is closely connected to some forms of dementia.



A healthy lifestyle to lower your blood pressure

If your blood pressure is too high, you can make healthy changes to your lifestyle to help bring it down. The following changes to your diet and activity can have a real effect on your blood pressure.

1. Eat less salt

Too much salt raises your blood pressure, so it is important to eat as little as possible. Most of the salt you eat is not what you add to your food, but is in prepared foods like bread, breakfast cereals and ready meals. Don't add salt to food when cooking or at the table. When shopping for food, check the labels and choose low-salt options when you can.

2. Eat more fruit and vegetables

Eating more fruit and vegetables helps to lower your blood pressure. Adults should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. A portion is 80 grams, or roughly the size of your fist.

Try to eat a range of different fruits and vegetables. Dried, frozen and tinned are fine, but watch out for added salt, sugar or fats.

3. Drink less alcohol

If you drink too much alcohol, this will raise your blood pressure over time. The current recommended limits are 21 units of alcohol a week for men, and 14 units a week for women. A unit is roughly half a pint of beer or cider, a small glass of wine, or a single pub measure of spirits. If you keep to the recommended alcohol limits, this should help keep your blood pressure down.

4. Keep to a healthy weight

Losing weight, if you need to, will help lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of health problems. The best way to lose weight is to choose more low-fat and low-calorie foods, and increase your physical activity. Set yourself realistic goals. Make small changes in your diet and activity levels that you can keep to for life.

5. Get more active

30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week can keep your heart healthy, and can lower your blood pressure. If you can't find 30 minutes in your day, increasing your activity by even a small amount can help. Think about how you can be more active in your daily life. Any activity that leaves you feeling warm and slightly out of breath is ideal.

*This leaflet has been prepared and is copyright of the Blood Pressure Association
They are the UK's leading blood pressure charity – lowering the nation's blood pressure to prevent stroke, heart attack and heart disease. High blood pressure can be successfully treated and prevented. They are there to help.*

For more information, please contact:

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Website: www.bpassoc.org.uk