



Blood Pressure

What is blood pressure?

Blood Pressure is a measure of the force that your heart uses to pump blood around your body.

How is blood pressure measured?

Blood pressure is measured in millimetres of mercury or mmHg. When your blood pressure is written down you will see a top number and a bottom number.

- Systolic pressure is the top number. This is the pressure when your heart pumps blood through arteries and around your body.
- Diastolic pressure is the bottom number. This is the pressure when your heart is resting in between beats.

For example, if your blood pressure is “140 over 90” or 140/90mmHg, it means you have a systolic pressure of 140mmHg and a diastolic pressure of 90mmHg.

As a general guide:

Non-elevated – less than 120/70 mmHg

Elevated – between 120/70 mmHg and 139/89 mmHg

Hypertension – over 140/90 mmHg

High blood pressure

If your blood pressure is consistently higher than 140/90mmHg then you may have high blood pressure, which is medically known as hypertension.

Over the years high blood pressure slowly damages the blood vessels by making them narrower and more rigid. This means your heart must work harder to push the blood through your blood vessels and the overall blood pressure rises. It is easier for clots to get caught and for fatty debris (atheroma) to block your blood vessels increasing your risk of a heart attack and stroke.

High blood pressure has no symptoms, so it is important to get your blood pressure checked regularly.

What causes high blood pressure?

High blood pressure is often related to unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as smoking, drinking too much alcohol, being overweight and not exercising enough.

Blood pressure can sometimes be inherited from our families and can increase with age.

What can I do to prevent high blood pressure?

In addition to taking your medication prescribed by your GP, making changes to your lifestyle will help reduce your blood pressure.

1. Losing weight



2. Reducing your salt intake



3. Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink



4. Taking regular exercise and being more active



5. Increasing the amount of fruit and vegetables you eat



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