

# High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

High blood pressure means that your blood pressure is continually higher than the recommended level.

It rarely has noticeable symptoms.

About half of people over 65, and about 1 in 4 middle aged adults have high blood pressure.



You are at increased risk of high blood pressure if you:

- are overweight;
- have a family history of high blood pressure;
- smoke;
- are of African or Caribbean descent;
- eat too much salt;
- don't eat enough fruit and vegetables;
- don't do enough exercise;
- drink too many caffeine based drinks;
- drink too much alcohol;
- are aged over 65; or
- have certain underlying medical conditions such as diabetes or kidney disease.



Healthy adults over 40 should have their blood pressure checked once every five years.

If you are at increased risk of high blood pressure then you should have your blood pressure checked more often.

If left untreated high blood pressure can lead to Cardiovascular and Kidney disease.

Cardiovascular disease includes

- Angina
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- TIA
- Peripheral arterial disease

## Checking your blood pressure

It is most likely that you will have your blood pressure checked at the surgery initially. If it is found to be high you may be advised to monitor it at home for a period of time.

If you wish you can purchase your own monitor. The British Hypertension Society has a

list of validated monitors for home use, and they cost from as little as £10. Please visit the website below or ask in surgery for a hard copy.

The surgery also has a number of monitors that it can loan out as and when one becomes available.



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# Will I need treatment for my blood pressure?

If after several readings your blood pressure remains elevated you will be asked to discuss this further with your GP. Depending on various factors (such as weight, smoking, cholesterol, and underlying medical conditions) the level at which blood pressure is considered high enough to treat with medication can vary from

person to person.

Your GP may use a cardiovascular risk calculator to help decide whether treatment should be initiated. Current guidelines advise that if your score gives you a 2 in 10 risk or more of developing cardiovascular disease in the next 10 years then treatment is advised.

If your risk is below this it may be that you can make lifestyle changes in order to reduce your blood pressure and avoid medication.



## How can I make lifestyle changes?

### Diet

Eat less than 6g of salt a day (about a teaspoonful).

Eat a low-fat diet that includes lots of fibre and at least five portions of fruit and veg a day.

Drink less than four caffeine-rich drinks a day.

Keep alcohol intake within the recommended levels (men 3-4 units/day; women 2-3 units/day). Remember to have alcohol-free days.

### Exercise

Do at least 30 minutes of physical activity on five or more days of the week. This can include activities such as brisk walking, swimming, cycling and dancing.

The activity should make you feel warm and slightly out of breath.

If you can't manage five days a week you should aim to do 150 minutes per week.

### Others

Stop smoking (see leaflets in surgery for local stop smoking clinics).

Lose weight. This should be possible by changing your diet and increasing your exercise levels. To find out if you need to lose weight calculate your BMI (see resources below).

Studies have shown that lifestyle medication can lower blood pressure as much as a single tablet.

Should you require more information and tips about how to reduce your chances of developing high blood pressure both [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk) and [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) have a wealth of resources available. If you do not have access to the internet please ask in surgery for further advice.

**NHS** choices

