

## How is high blood pressure treated?

- ✓ Make changes to your diet and lifestyle. If this doesn't lower your blood pressure enough, your doctor can give you medication to treat it.
- ✓ It's important that you take your medication the way your doctor or pharmacist tells you to take it. If you take less medicine (not as often as you should, or less than prescribed) it can't work as it should. If you take more than told, it can harm your body.
- ✓ Keep your doctor's or clinic appointments. The doctor needs to keep monitoring your blood pressure. The doctor needs to make changes to your medication. The doctor can change it, make it more or make it less. The doctor will also give you advice on any other steps to take.
- ✓ Some medicine, including herbal medicine, and supplements (for example vitamins and other health products) can interact with blood pressure lowering medication. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking them.



Sometimes people choose not to take blood pressure medication. Here is 2 reasons why:

**If I start to take medication now, I have to take it for the rest of my life.**

Yes, this is often true. However, the doctor can sometimes stop or lower the medication when you stick to your lifestyle and diet changes. If left untreated, a blood pressure of 180/120 or higher leads to an 80% chance of death within one year. Most people only live 10 months. Left untreated, high blood pressure can also lead to heart attack, stroke, blindness, and kidney disease.

**Take care of your health, make the right choices today.**

**I don't want to get addicted to pills.**

You can't get addicted to blood pressure medication. Taking medication every day doesn't mean you are addicted to it.

*A Humor Diagnostica Community Service Initiative*

# Blood Pressure

## Your heart

Take your hand and ball it into a fist. This is about the size of your heart. Your heart is a muscle and it is a very important organ in your body.

**B**lood  
**P**ressure

Your heart pumps blood across your body using blood vessels. Blood vessels are like tunnels that need to be open for the blood to flow freely.

Your body needs the oxygen in your blood to work correctly.

## What Is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of the blood against the blood vessel walls as the heart pumps. When the heart squeezes and pushes blood into the vessels, blood pressure rises. It lowers again when the heart relaxes.

Blood pressure goes up as you move or work and down as you rest. Some pressure is always needed to keep the blood moving.

When your blood pressure stays high, even when you rest, you need to do something about it.

## What do my blood pressure numbers mean?

A doctor or nurse takes your blood pressure to see if it is high, normal or low. When they check your blood pressure, they give you two numbers.

The first number is called the systolic blood pressure. This number stands for the highest level of blood pressure in your blood vessels when your heart beats.

The second number is the diastolic blood pressure. It tells how low your blood pressure is when your heart relaxes. For example: 120/80 (120 over 80) means the systolic pressure (when the heart squeezes) is 120 and the diastolic pressure (when the heart relaxes) is 80.

Your blood pressure should be under 140/90.

## Why should I regularly check my blood pressure?

Many people with high blood pressure feel fine and they don't know that their blood pressure is high. People can develop high blood pressure at any age. Not only old people are at risk. More and more teenagers have high blood pressure as a result of lifestyle and diet.

**Hypertension is high blood pressure. Hypotension is low blood pressure.**

Hypertension is the medical term for high blood pressure.

If high blood pressure is not treated, it can damage the heart, brain, kidneys and eyes. Damage brings about a higher risk of stroke, sudden death, heart attack and hardening of the blood vessels (atherosclerosis).

High blood pressure means the heart has to pump harder to spread the blood around your body. The blood vessels are also under greater stress as they carry blood. Your heart can weaken because of the extra workload and it won't be able to do the job.

A stroke happens when part of your brain doesn't have enough oxygen. This causes the brain cells to die. Uncontrolled high blood pressure also damages and weakens your brain's blood vessels, causing them to narrow, burst or leak.

## What is low blood pressure?

Hypotension is the medical term for low blood pressure. Low blood pressure can cause light-headedness, weakness, fainting and a risk of injury from falls. Unsafe low blood pressure can leave your body without enough oxygen to carry out its normal functions, damaging your heart and brain.

## What are the signs of high blood pressure?

High blood pressure often has no warning signs. Many people with high blood pressure do not feel unwell.

Changes in vision (how you see things), nosebleeds, shortness of breath and headaches that won't go away are often signs of high blood pressure.

Swollen ankles, feet or hands also indicate heart problems. Visit your clinic, doctor or nurse.

## What causes high blood pressure and can I prevent it?

Sometimes high blood pressure runs in the family. Even in these cases you can take steps to lower your blood pressure. Seven things you can do:



1. Get your blood pressure checked regularly. Blood pressure rises with age. The older you get the more at risk you are.
2. Eat healthy. Don't eat too much salt or salty food. Many fast foods use too much salt. Eat more vegetables, especially leafy green vegetables. Don't drink energy drinks. They contain a lot of sugar, caffeine and other products that can increase blood pressure.
3. Keep a healthy weight. Being overweight puts stress on your heart and blood vessels. The heart has to work harder than it should. Lose weight if you are overweight.
4. Get more exercise. Walking is good for you. Use the stairs and not the lift. Play ball with your kids in the yard.
5. Cut alcohol use. Men shouldn't drink more than 2 standard drinks per day. Women shouldn't drink more than 1 standard drink per day. A standard drink is 330ml of beer, 100ml of wine or 30ml of other alcohol products. Alcohol also makes you gain weight.
6. Stop smoking and don't vape. Smoking narrows the blood vessels.
7. Get enough sleep. The body needs 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night.

**High blood pressure often has no warning signs. Even when you feel fine, have your blood pressure checked regularly.**