

## What can I do to help control my blood pressure?

While you can't change your genes or age, making healthy changes to your lifestyle means you can still take control of your blood pressure.

**Physical activity:** Regular physical activity can help to reduce and control your blood pressure.

**Cutting down on salt:** Excess salt can increase your blood pressure. For adults, the recommendation is no more than 6 grams of salt a day – that's about one teaspoonful.

**Balanced diet:** Eating a healthy, balanced diet every day that includes plenty of fruit and vegetables can help to lower your blood pressure.

**Sleep:** Poor sleep can lead to high stress levels and bad habits, like unhealthy eating that can damage your heart. Everyone is different, but most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night. If you're constantly tired during the day, you probably don't get enough sleep.

**Reduce alcohol consumption:** Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure to unhealthy levels.

**Smoking:** If you're a smoker, stopping is the single most important step you can take to improve your heart health. Smoking is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

**Reducing stress:** The way you deal with stress can affect your blood pressure, so it's important to learn how to relax and manage stressful situations effectively.

**Losing weight:** If you're overweight, making small changes to what and how much you eat and drink can really help you lose a few pounds. There are many health benefits to losing weight.

## What if my blood pressure remains high?

In addition to making lifestyle changes, your doctor may recommend you to take medicines to lower your blood pressure.

### Your quick guide to

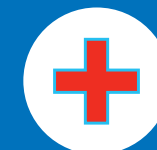
# Understanding Blood Pressure



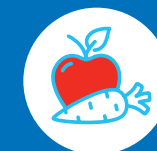
Over 4 million adults in England have high blood pressure and don't know it



High blood pressure rarely has any symptoms. The only way to know is to get your blood pressure checked



High blood pressure can increase the risk of stroke, heart failure and heart attack if left untreated



There are simple things you can do to help bring your blood pressure down, including lifestyle changes and medicines

## What is High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure means your heart has to work harder to pump blood around your body, so the pressure is always higher than it should be.

When you have your blood pressure measured, your reading is written as two numbers. For example, your reading will be something like **140/90**.

**140/90 mmHg**  
 ▲ Systolic    ▲ Diastolic    ▲ Millimetres of Mercury

**Systolic pressure:** This is the highest pressure, when your heart beats and pushes blood around the body.

**Diastolic pressure:** This is the lowest level, when your heart relaxes between beats.

The ideal blood pressure is considered to be more than **90/60** and less than **120/80**.

A consistent reading of **140/90mmHg** or higher could mean you have high blood pressure and more risk of other health problems, including cardiovascular disease.

## What Causes High Blood Pressure?

For most people, there is no obvious cause for their high blood pressure.

However, there are a number of factors that can increase the risk of developing high blood pressure:

- ♥ smoking
- ♥ being overweight or obese
- ♥ not doing enough physical activity
- ♥ eating too much salt
- ♥ drinking too much alcohol
- ♥ not eating enough fruit and vegetables
- ♥ do not get much sleep or have disturbed sleep
- ♥ stress
- ♥ increase in age
- ♥ high blood pressure is more common if you are of Black African or Black Caribbean descent
- ♥ sometimes high blood pressure runs in families

## Symptoms of High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure rarely has noticeable symptoms, but it's associated with around half of all heart attacks and strokes. That's why it's so important to get yours checked.

### What can I do to look after my health?

Adults in England, aged 40 to 72 and without pre-existing conditions are entitled to a free NHS Health Check every 5 years.

The Health Check is designed to spot early signs and risk of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, dementia and type 2 diabetes.

If you haven't been invited for a Health Check, call your GP surgery to book one.

### Further information and support

- ♥ Your Local Community Pharmacist
- ♥ Your General Practitioner (GP)
- ♥ Search 'Blood Pressure UK' online
- ♥ Search 'NHS Quit Smoking' online