

Help for High Blood Pressure

What Is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is a measurement of the force of flowing blood against the artery wall. In a healthy body blood moves easily through the veins and arteries. When your blood pressure is high, your blood vessels become damaged and the heart has to work harder.



Unfortunately, more than 1 in 4 Britons have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. Left unchecked, this disease can lead to some very serious consequences including heart disease, stroke, or eye and kidney damage. High blood pressure is called the silent killer because many people don't experience symptoms and as a result don't realize that their pressure is high or that damage is occurring.

What Causes High Blood Pressure?

Although the exact cause of high blood pressure has not been identified there are various behaviors and conditions that increase the risk:

- **Obesity**
- **Smoking & excessive alcohol consumption**
- **Lack of physical activity**
- **A diet high in table salt (use sea salt)**
- **Stress**
- **Old age**
- **Family history**

Understanding Your Blood Pressure Reading

Systolic Blood Pressure

High = 140 and above

Pre Hypertension = 121-139

Normal = Below 120

Diastolic Blood Pressure

High = 90 and above

Pre Hypertension = 81-89

Normal = Below 80

Two numbers make up your blood pressure reading. The top number is called the systolic pressure and is a measurement of the pressure when the heart contracts to push blood into the body. The bottom number is called the diastolic pressure and represents the pressure when the heart is relaxed and refilling with blood. A blood pressure measurement of 120/80 mmHg (millimeters of mercury) is expressed verbally as "120over 80." An individual's blood pressure is considered high when it persists above 140/90 for an extended period of time.

Symptoms of Hypertension Include:

- **Difficulty breathing**
- **Irregular heartbeat**
- **Blood in the urine**
- **Severe headache**
- **Fatigue or confusion**
- **Vision problems**
- **Chest pain**



What Can I Do To Lower My Blood Pressure?

The good news is that unlike some conditions, there is a lot you can do to lower your blood pressure if its high. Even if your condition is hereditary, taking action now will allow you to live a longer & healthier life. There are 4 positive lifestyle changes to focus on in order to improve your blood pressure:

<p style="text-align: center;">Nutrition</p> <p>There are many changes you can make to your diet to improve blood pressure:</p> <p>Add a serving of fruits and vegetables to each of your meals and snacks and limit meat to six ounces a day. Try eating some vegetarian meals.</p> <p>Add more whole grains & dry beans to your diet and choose healthy snacks low in salt instead of chips, cookies etc-.</p> <p>Read food labels carefully to choose products that are lower in sodium and be aware of portion sizes</p> <p>Check out the DASH diet for more specific guidelines</p> <p>More information on the DASH diet: http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dash-diet/HI00020</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Exercise</p> <p><i>Exercise makes blood flow to working muscles and has a lasting effect, as it lowers your resting heart rate and cardiac output. Heres a few ideas on how you can start today:</i></p> <p>Discuss an exercise plan with your doctor</p> <p>Start off gradually with even just 5-10 minutes a day of stretching, strength training or aerobic exercise.</p> <p>Schedule in your workouts like an appointment</p> <p>Whether its the gym, exercise videos, home equipment or outdoor activities, find something you enjoy.</p> <p>Team up with a workout buddy to keep each other motivated</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Unhealthy Habits</p> <p><i>Excessive amounts of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs can have an impact on our health that is not always obvious but the long-term negative effects are evident:</i></p> <p>Smoking does harm to your body by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -decreasing oxygen to the heart -increasing blood pressure & heart rate -increasing blood clotting -causing constriction of blood vessels -damaging the cells that line coronary arteries and other blood vessels <p>Alcohol in moderation(1 drink/day for women and 2/day for men) can be beneficial for heart health. One drink equals one 12-ounce beer,one 5-ounce glass of wine or one 1.5-ounce shot of whiskey. If you're drinking more than the suggested amounts, you may experience a dramatic increase in blood pressure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -alcohol interferes with the livers ability to metabolize hormones that control blood pressure. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weight Management</p> <p>Losing weight-even a modest amount (3-10pounds) can significantly lower not only your blood pressure but your risk for cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes as well.</p> <p>Weight management should be the number one goal of a hypertensive person.</p> <p>To lose a pound a week it is necessary to create a 3500 calorie deficit each week. This can be accomplished by cutting back calories and in-creasing activity.</p> <p>Carrying fat around the waist area puts people at a higher risk for obesity-related health problems. Women whose waists measure morethan35 inches or men whose waists measure more than 40 inches have a higher health risk because of their fat distribution.</p> <p>A healthy weight can be achieved with a nutritious diet, exercise and eliminating unhealthy habits.</p>