

# High blood pressure (hypertension)

## What is hypertension?

High blood pressure, or hypertension, rarely has noticeable symptoms. But if untreated, it increases your risk of serious problems such as heart attacks and strokes.

Blood pressure is recorded with 2 numbers. The systolic pressure (higher number) is the force at which your heart pumps blood around your body and the diastolic pressure (lower number) is the resistance to the blood flow in the blood vessels.

They're both measured in millimetres of mercury (mmHg).

As a general guide:

- high blood pressure is considered to be from 140/90mmHg (or an average of 135/85mmHg at home) – or 150/90mmHg (or an average of 145/85mmHg at home) if you're over the age of 80
- ideal blood pressure is usually considered to be between 90/60mmHg and 120/80mmHg, while the target for over-80s is below 150/90mmHg (or 145/85mmHg at home)

Blood pressure readings between 120/80mmHg and 140/90mmHg could mean you're at risk of developing high blood pressure if you do not take steps to keep your blood pressure under control.

Everyone's blood pressure will be slightly different. What's considered low or high for you may be normal for someone else.

## What causes hypertension?

While the cause of high blood pressure in most people remains unclear, inactivity, poor diet, obesity, older age, and genetics can all contribute to the development of hypertension. Some medications may also increase your blood pressure. If you're unsure about any of your current medications, speak to your GP.

High blood pressure can often be prevented or reduced by eating healthily, maintaining a healthy weight, taking regular exercise, drinking alcohol and caffeine in moderation and not smoking.

## Treating hypertension

Simple lifestyle changes can help reduce high blood pressure, although some people may need to take medicine as well. Your GP can advise you about changes you can make to your lifestyle and discuss whether they think you'd benefit from medicine.

## References

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/>