



BLOOD PRESSURE EXPLAINED

Healthy Heart

Blood pressure is the pressure of the blood in the arteries as the heart pumps it around the body. It is usually recorded as two figures like this: 120/80.

The larger number (systolic) indicates the pressure in the arteries when the heart squeezes out blood at each beat. The lower number (diastolic) indicates the pressure as the heart relaxes before the next beat.

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is one of the most preventable causes of illness and early death in adult Australians. Your blood pressure can change regularly therefore it is important to have regular checks with your doctor.

The following figures can give a guide to blood pressure readings:

Normal	Less than 120/80mmHg
High Normal	Between 120/80 and 139/89mmHg
High	Between 140/90 and 179/109mmHg
Very High	More than 180/110mmHg

How to control blood pressure

- Have your blood pressure checked regularly, at least every 2 years. Have it checked more regularly if you have other risk factors such as being overweight or obese, if you're a smoker, having a family history of heart disease, have had a stroke, heart attack, raised blood cholesterol or diabetes
- Eat a wide variety of foods including foods low in salt, with less fat (especially saturated fat), and plenty of cereals, fish, fruit and vegetables
- Exercise on most days for at least 30 minutes
- Don't smoke
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Minimise stress and anxiety
- Limit alcohol consumption. Have no more than 2 standard drinks per day
- If you are on medication, take it exactly as prescribed by your Doctor



Things to Remember

- Hypertension or high blood pressure is a risk factor in many health conditions such as heart attack, kidney failure and stroke
- Hypertension often doesn't show any symptoms so regular checkups are important
- Leading a healthy lifestyle is one of the best ways to both treat and prevent hypertension

Factors contributing to high blood pressure include:

- Family history
- Age
- Being overweight or obese
- Lack of exercise
- A diet high in salt
- Excessive alcohol intake
- Kidney disease
- Certain drugs, especially anti-inflammatory pain killers
- Cigarette smoking
- High levels of saturated fat in the diet
- High blood cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Stress

