

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

(Hypertension)



WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

- Blood Pressure is the force that circulating blood puts on your arteries (blood vessels).
- Blood pressure is recorded as two numbers eg. 140/80.
- The top first figure (systolic) is the pressure in the arteries when the heart contracts.
- The bottom second figure (diastolic) is the pressure in the arteries when the heart relaxes.
- Blood pressure varies during the day. It tends to be highest in the morning and lowest at night. It may also be higher if you are anxious or under stress.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION)

- If you are found to have high blood pressure it will not be based on one blood pressure reading alone but on an average of 3 readings or on the results of a 24 hour blood pressure monitor or, in some cases, home blood pressure readings.
- High blood pressure is a reading of 140/90 or above.
- High blood pressure occurs when the vessels through which the blood flows becomes narrowed or stiffened or the volume of circulating blood becomes too high.
- High blood pressure can develop over many years without noticeable symptoms.
- In most cases the aim is to reduce your blood pressure to below 140/85.
- If you have diabetes, heart disease or kidney disease then the target may well be lower than 140/85.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH RISKS OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

High Blood Pressure is not a disease in itself, but it can lead to an increased risk of you developing a serious condition such as stroke, heart attack and kidney disease. **REMEMBER** if you are overweight, smoke, drink too much alcohol or take little exercise you are further increasing your risk.

TREATMENT OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

You may be prescribed medication to lower your blood pressure but there are a number of **WAYS YOU CAN REDUCE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE.**

- **KEEP A HEALTHY WEIGHT.**
If you are overweight losing even a small amount will reduce the work load of your heart and help keep your blood pressure down.
- **EXERCISE** regularly. By exercising regularly you can bring down your blood pressure by as much as many blood pressure lowering drugs. Gradually increase the amount of exercise you do aiming for 30 minutes of aerobic exercise at least 5 times per week e.g. brisk walking.
- Reduce your intake of **SALT.**
- Eat at least 5 portions of **FRUIT AND VEGETABLES** a day.
- Eat less total and **SATURATED FAT**
- Limit the amount of **ALCOHOL** you drink.
- **STOP SMOKING.** Nicotine raises your blood pressure.



Salt

Reducing the amount of salt you eat will help keep your blood pressure down.

- Use less salt in cooking and at the table
Taste food before salting it.
- Try using herbs, spices or pepper for flavour instead.
- Processed food can contain a high amount of salt. Use fresh food as much as possible.
- Avoid salt substitutes.
- Look out for lower salt or 'No Added Salt'.

Alcohol

Too much alcohol can increase blood pressure, damage the heart muscle and cause weight gain.

Stick to recommended 'safe' levels i.e. 1-2 units per day for women and 2-3 units per day for men. Remember to have 2-3 alcohol free days each week.

1 unit = a pub measure of spirits/ ½ pint of beer, lager or cider/ a small glass of wine (125mls).

Fat

Eating less fat will help reduce the amount of harmful fats (cholesterol) in your blood.

- Grill, bake, boil, microwave, steam or stew instead of frying.
- Choose lower fat dairy products such as skimmed or semi skimmed milk and low fat yoghurts.
- When using fat or oil for spreading or cooking, use small amounts of monosaturated fat (olive or rape seed) or polyunsaturated (corn or sunflower).
- Choose lean meat and trim off any visible fat.
- Choose fish more often. White fish is low in fat and oily fish contains heart protective oils (omega 3).
- Eat fewer pies, pastries, sausages, burgers, chips and butteries which contain a lot of 'hidden' fat.

- Cut down on cheese. Choose a strong variety you need less! Try lower fat cheeses such as Edam, Gouda and Brie.
- Cut down on high fat snacks such as crisps, nuts, biscuits and cakes.

Fruit and Vegetables

Eating at least 5 portions a day will reduce your risk of heart disease by helping to prevent the build up of fatty materials in the walls of the coronary arteries.

Fruit and vegetables are high in fibre and low in calories and will help fill you up
Fruit and vegetables can be fresh, frozen or tinned. Choose a variety of different ones to get the most benefit.

1 portion of fruit = 1 apple/1cup of berries or grapes/large slice of melon
1 portion of veg. = 1 carrot/2-3 tablespoons or peas or sweetcorn/5 florets of cauliflower or broccoli/
desert bowl of salad.

Labelling

Check labels carefully as many products contain more fat and salt than you expect.

A little is (per 100g)
3g of fat
1g of saturates
0.1g of sodium
Or 0.25g of salt
0.25g of salt

A lot is (per 100g)
20g of fat
5g of saturates
0.5g of sodium
Or 1.25g of salt

Additional leaflets are available so please ask your doctor or nurse if you would like more detailed information on any aspect of your diet. Your doctor or nurse may also consider referring you to a dietitian for individual assessment.