

# Simple steps to an accurate reading

There are a few simple steps that you can follow to be sure that you get an accurate reading of your blood pressure.

## Before you take your blood pressure reading

1. Many things can make your blood pressure rise for a short time. Make sure you do not need to use the toilet, and that you have not just eaten a big meal. Do not measure your blood pressure within 30 minutes of drinking caffeine or smoking.
2. Wear loose-fitting clothes like a short sleeved t-shirt so that you can push your sleeve up comfortably.
3. Always use the same arm for blood pressure readings, as each arm will give you a slightly different reading. If possible, use the arm that your doctor or nurse uses when measuring your blood pressure.
4. Before you take your readings, rest for five minutes. You should be sitting down in a quiet place, preferably at a desk or table, with your arm resting on a firm surface and your feet flat on the floor.
5. Make sure your arm is supported and that the cuff around your arm is at the same level as your heart. You may need to support your arm with a cushion to be sure it is at the correct height. Your arm should be relaxed, not tensed.



## How to take your blood pressure using a home blood pressure monitor

1. Put the cuff on following the instructions that came with your monitor.
2. Make sure you are relaxed and comfortable. If you are anxious or uncomfortable, this will make your blood pressure rise temporarily.
3. When you are taking your reading, keep still and silent. Moving and talking can affect your reading.
4. Take two or three readings, each about two minutes apart, and then work out the average. Some people find that their first reading is much higher than the next readings. If this is true for you, keep taking readings until they level out and stop falling, then use this as your reading.
5. Record your reading, either in the memory of your monitor or on computer or paper.

## Tips on taking blood pressure readings

- Do not round your measurements up or down – if you don't keep accurate records of your blood pressure it may affect the treatment you receive.
- Do not be alarmed if you get an unexpected high reading – a one-off reading may be nothing to worry about. Measure your blood pressure again at another time, but if you find that it continues to be high after a period of time, see your doctor or nurse.
- Do not check your blood pressure too often – you may become worried or stressed about small changes in your reading. This can raise your blood pressure in the short-term. Worrying about your blood-pressure reading may actually make it higher.

# How to lower your blood pressure

An unhealthy lifestyle will raise your blood pressure over time. And the higher your blood pressure becomes, the higher your risk of having a stroke or heart attack in the future.



But the good news is that if you have high blood pressure, healthy changes will help to bring it down. And you don't have to wait until you have high blood pressure to make healthy lifestyle changes. The more you can reduce your blood pressure, the lower your risk of a heart attack or stroke will be.

## 1. Blood Pressure Diet - Eat less salt

Too much salt raises your blood pressure, so it is important to eat as little as possible. In fact, some people with high blood pressure may be able to avoid blood pressure medicines by cutting down on salt.

Most of the salt you eat is not what you add to your food, but is in prepared foods like bread, breakfast cereals and ready meals.

Don't add salt to food when cooking or at the table. When shopping for food, check the labels and choose low-salt options when you can.

## 2. Blood Pressure Diet - Eat more fruit and vegetables

Eating more fruit and vegetables helps to lower your blood pressure. Adults should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. A portion is 80 grams, or roughly the size of your fist.

Try to eat a range of different fruits and vegetables. Dried, frozen and tinned are fine, but watch out for added salt, sugar or fats.

## 3. Blood Pressure Diet - Keep to a healthy weight

Losing weight, if you need to, will help lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of health problems. The best way to lose weight is to choose more low-fat and low-calorie foods, and increase your physical activity.

Set yourself realistic goals. Make small changes to your eating habits and activity levels that you can keep to for life.

## 4. Blood Pressure Diet - Drink less alcohol

If you drink too much alcohol, this will raise your blood pressure over time. The current recommended limits are 21 units of alcohol a week for men, and 14 units a week for women. A unit is roughly half a pint of beer or cider, a small glass of wine, or a single pub measure of spirits.

If you keep to the recommended alcohol limits, this should help keep your blood pressure down.

## 5. Blood Pressure and Exercise - Get more active

Being moderately active for 30 minutes five times a week can keep your heart healthy, and can lower your blood pressure. If you can't find 30 minutes in your day, increasing your activity by even a small amount can help.

Think about how you can be more active in your daily life. Any activity that leaves you feeling warm and slightly out of breath is ideal.