



Know your numbers

Do you know your numbers? Having a measurement taken is the only accurate way to discover what your blood pressure is.

Hypertension (high blood pressure) rarely presents any obvious symptoms which is why it is often referred to as the silent killer.

Hypertension is still a huge health concern in the UK with around a third of all adults being affected. If left untreated, hypertension will increase the risk of stroke, chronic kidney disease and heart attack. Measuring blood pressure is easy, quick and accessible, you can buy machines to use at home or visit the local pharmacy or your GP surgery.

[Click here](#) to learn more about managing your blood pressure.

Tip of the month: If you're tired, exercise will help!

If you are physically tired, the best thing to do is exercise as it will give you more energy than sitting. Studies have found that the blood and oxygen flow through the body will give you more energy and improve your mood. The increase in endorphin levels can contribute to a feeling of well-being.

Quote of the month:

“ You don't need to be 'perfect', just try to be better than you were yesterday ”



**Save the date –
Know your
Numbers! Week.**

Know your Numbers! is Blood Pressure UK's award-winning flagship campaign which raises awareness of the risks of high blood pressure. The highlight of the campaign is Know your Numbers! Week, the nation's biggest blood pressure testing event, which takes place in the second week of September each year. [Learn more here](#)

5 top blood pressure tips

1. Increase your activity

Exercise is one of the best things you can do to reduce your blood pressure and improve your heart health. Regular exercise helps make your heart stronger and more efficient at pumping blood, which lowers the pressure in your arteries. To keep fit and healthy it's recommended that adults conduct 150 minutes of moderate exercise, such as walking, or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise, such as running, per week. Learn more about the physical activity guidelines [here](#).

2. Reduce your sodium intake

Salt intake is high around the world. In large part, this is due to processed and prepared foods. For this reason, many public health efforts are aimed at lowering salt in the food industry. In many studies, salt has been linked to high blood pressure and heart events, like stroke. However, more recent research indicates that the relationship between sodium and high blood pressure is less clear. One reason for this may be genetic differences in how people process sodium. About half of people with high blood pressure and a quarter of people with normal levels seem to have a sensitivity to salt. If you already have high blood pressure, it's worth cutting back your sodium intake to see if it makes a difference. Swap out processed foods with fresh ones and try seasoning with herbs and spices, rather than salt.

3. Eat foods that are rich in potassium

Potassium is an important mineral which helps your body to get rid of sodium and eases the pressure on your blood vessels. Modern diets have increased most people's sodium intake while decreasing potassium intake. To get a better balance of potassium to sodium in your diet, focus on eating fewer processed foods and more fresh, whole foods. Foods that are high in potassium include fruits such as; Bananas, Melons, Avocados, Oranges and Apricots. Other food that are naturally high in potassium include; Nuts and seeds, beans, milk, yoghurt, tomatoes and potatoes.

4. Manage stress more efficiently

Stress is a key driver of high blood pressure. When you're chronically stressed, your body is in a constant fight-or-flight mode. On a physical level, that means a faster heart rate and constricted blood vessels. When you experience stress, you might also be more likely to engage in other behaviours, such as drinking alcohol or eating unhealthy food, that can negatively affect blood pressure.

5. Try meditation or deep breathing

While these two behaviours could also fall under "stress reduction techniques," meditation and deep breathing deserve a specific mention. Both meditation and deep breathing are thought to activate the parasympathetic nervous system. This system is engaged when the body relaxes, slowing the heart rate and lowering blood pressure. There's quite a bit of research in this area, with studies showing that different styles of meditation appear to have benefits for lowering blood pressure. Deep breathing techniques can also be quite effective. In one study, participants were asked to either take six deep breaths over the course of 30 seconds or to simply sit still for 30 seconds. Those who took breaths lowered their blood pressure more than those who just sat.

Food of the month: Berries

Blueberries, Strawberries and Raspberries are rich in natural compounds called flavonoids. One study evaluated the effect of a plant rich in flavonoids on 120 men and women diagnosed with high blood pressure and high cholesterol. The study found significantly decreased systolic and diastolic blood pressure over a 6-month period linked to the plant flavonoids.

Fact of the month: Did you know that cholesterol-free can be bad for your cholesterol?

Food labels may say that it is cholesterol-free, however, that does not mean that the food is good for your cholesterol levels. Trans fats, which are cholesterol-raising, naturally have no cholesterol but can be detrimental to your cholesterol levels. Trans fats can be found in many fried foods and baked goods. Trans fat, such as partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, and saturated fats are not good for your cholesterol levels and should be avoided as much as possible.