**Is your blood pressure healthy?**



**It's thought that around 30% of people in England have high blood pressure, and many don't even know it. Though more than half of them are over 60, a large number are younger. Could you be one of them?**

[**Common questions about blood pressure**](http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/category.aspx?CategoryID=201)

High blood pressure is common and often has no symptoms.

**Check your blood pressure**: The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked. Health professionals such as nurses, pharmacists and GPs can check your blood pressure with a simple test.

High blood pressure increases your risk of having a heart attack or stroke, but there are things you can do to lower your blood pressure.

**Keeping blood pressure healthy:** There are lots of different ways you can have a significant impact on your blood pressure. Reducing your blood pressure can make a massive difference to your health. It can prevent you from having a stroke or heart attack. There are so many benefits to making sure your blood pressure stays at a reasonable level."

The following steps towards a healthier lifestyle will help lower your blood pressure and keep it at a healthy level.

**Exercise:** Do at least 30 minutes of exercise five times a week, such as walking, dancing, cycling, or swimming. If you're not used to exercising, don't start too quickly. Talk to your doctor about how much exercise will suit you, and build up slowly. Find out more about how to start:

* [walking](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/getting-started-guides/Pages/getting-started-walking.aspx)
* [cycling](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/getting-started-guides/Pages/getting-started-cycling.aspx)
* [swimming](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/getting-started-guides/Pages/getting-started-swimming.aspx)
* [running](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/getting-started-guides/Pages/getting-started-running.aspx)

**Healthy eating:** A healthy, balanced diet will help reduce your blood pressure. A healthy diet includes eating:

* [less salt](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/salt.aspx)
* [less saturated fat](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/Eat-less-saturated-fat.aspx)
* [five portions of fruit and vegetables a day](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/5ADAY/Pages/Whatcounts.aspx)

Aim to eat no more than 6g of salt a day. Don't add salt to food. [Read food labels](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/loseweight/Pages/readingfoodlabels.aspx) when you're shopping to help you buy healthier foods. Many foods, including breakfast cereals, bread, and soup contain added salt.

Saturated fat is found in butter, ghee, lard, meat pies, fatty meat, sausages, cakes, biscuits, and food containing coconut oil or palm oil.

"Many people know to avoid butter because it's high in saturated fat, but if you have three biscuits with your morning coffee, you're still getting saturated fat," says Dr Mead.

Fruit and vegetables are good for health, whether they're fresh, tinned, frozen, dried or in juice.

**Lose weight:** Exercising and eating healthily will help you lose weight. [Obesity](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Obesity/Pages/Introduction.aspx) increases your risk of high blood pressure, so it's important to be a healthy weight.

To find out if you're a healthy weight and to get advice on losing weight, use the [BMI healthy weight calculator](http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Healthyweightcalculator.aspx?Tag=).

Get more [tips on losing weight](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Loseweight/Pages/Loseweighthome.aspx), and have a look at the [12-week weight loss guide](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/weight-loss-guide/Pages/weight-loss-guide.aspx).

**Limit your alcohol intake:** The recommended healthy limits for alcohol are:

* no more than three to four units a day for men
* no more than two to three units a day for women

One unit of alcohol is roughly half a pint of regular-strength lager or a 125ml glass of wine. Regularly drinking more than the recommended daily limits puts you at risk of a number of health problems, including [high blood pressure](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Blood-pressure-(high)/Pages/Introduction.aspx). Find out more about the [risks of alcohol](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx) and how you can cut down.

**Smoking:** Although smoking doesn't cause high blood pressure, it raises the risk of heart disease. Stopping smoking reduces this risk, and is especially important if you have high blood pressure.

**Medication**: Some people with high blood pressure need to take medication to lower it, as well as making the healthy lifestyle changes above. Find out more about: