

# YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

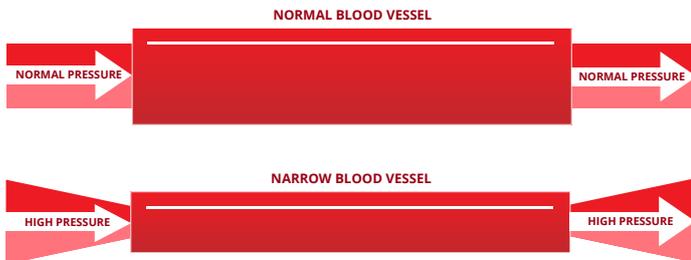
Blood Pressure (BP) is a measure of the force of blood pushing against your arteries during a heartbeat. Your reading is written as two numbers, for example 120/80 which represent these two phases:

**SYSTOLIC:** (First or top number) when the heart contracts, pushing blood out around the body.

**DIASTOLIC:** (Second or bottom number) when the heart relaxes, and blood flows back to the heart.

## Why you need to manage your blood pressure.

Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) is the leading cause of stroke, and one of the main major risk factors for heart attack, kidney failure and heart disease. Essentially a high blood pressure means the heart has to work harder to pump blood around the body. This contributes to hardening and narrowing of the arteries.



Ideally for most people the target is to have blood pressure below 120/80. Your doctor or nurse may tell you that your blood pressure target is slightly lower or higher than this which will depend on other medical conditions you may have or other risk factors for cardiovascular disease, and sometimes your age. You probably have high blood pressure if your BP is consistently over 140/90.

## Managing your blood pressure through lifestyle choices:

### Nutrition



Making healthy changes to your diet can help with BP. Include leafy greens, berries, beetroot, bananas, seeds, avocado, oats, wholegrain and garlic.

### Stress



Long term stress & poor coping mechanisms (drinking / smoking / fast food / inactivity) increase your risk of high BP. Try stress management techniques that work for you.

### Weight Management



Being overweight increases your risk of high BP. Infact your BP decreases as your weight decreases.

### Drink in Moderation



Excessive intake of alcohol can cause increases in blood pressure. Aim for less than 14 units per week.

### Sleep Well



Over time a lack of sleep can damage your body's ability to regulate stress hormones leading to high BP. Aim for 7-9 hours per night to allow recovery.

### Quit Smoking



In the long term smoking can damage and narrow blood vessels and in the short term increases blood pressure. It's lose-lose!

### Salt Intake



The higher your salt consumption the higher your BP generally. If it's flavour you crave substitute salt for pepper, herbs, garlic, ginger, chilli or lemon.

### Exercise



Exercise can increase BP but the effects are typically temporary. Being inactive is linked to high BP. Aim for 150 mins of moderate activity per week.

# Healthier lifestyle habits can have a cascading positive effect on your overall health and wellbeing as well as your BP.



For further information on improving your blood pressure visit [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)