



## WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

**Blood pressure** is the pressure of the blood on the walls of your arteries as your heart pumps it around your body. Your blood pressure naturally goes up and down all the time, adjusting to your heart's needs depending on what you are doing. For example, it will be different when you exercise than when you are relaxing.

Blood pressure can be measured by your health professional (doctor, nurse, or pharmacist) using an inflatable bag (cuff) that goes around your arm. It's joined to a device that measures the pressure.



### WHAT DO THE BLOOD PRESSURE READINGS MEAN?

Ask your health professional about your blood pressure reading and what it means for you. They will tell you whether it is normal or high. A normal reading is generally less than 130 on 85. Depending on your overall health, they will make a plan with you about how to manage your blood pressure.

**Talk to someone who is specially trained in heart health care to answer your questions**



**Hours: Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm**  
**Free phone: 13 11 12**  
**[www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)**

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# Heart Health Check

## BLOOD PRESSURE





## WHY IS YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE IMPORTANT?

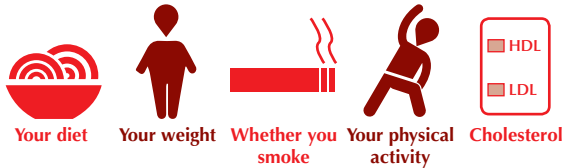
**One in three** adult Australians has high blood pressure. High blood pressure can be dangerous. It can increase the chances of you having a heart attack or stroke.

For most people having high blood pressure does not have any symptoms so you may have high blood pressure but not know it. It is important to know and understand your blood pressure level, as there may be things you and your doctor can do to improve it. This can reduce the chances of you having a heart attack or stroke.

Your doctor can help you to improve your overall heart health now and for the future.



Other things that can increase the risk of heart attack and stroke when you have high blood pressure are:

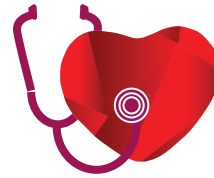


Your diet Your weight Whether you smoke Your physical activity Cholesterol (HDL and LDL)



If you are **45 years** or older (**35 years** or older for **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**), and have not had a heart attack or stroke it is recommended you have your blood pressure checked as part of a heart health check.

## HAVE A HEART HEALTH CHECK



What will happen?

### 1. TALK:

Your doctor can help you to improve your overall heart health. You may discuss:



What you eat



Your lifestyle & exercise



Your family health history



Your overall health (including kidney disease & diabetes)

### 2. LEARN:

Your doctor will check you:



Blood pressure



Cholesterol

### 3. PLAN:

Your doctor will help you to make changes to:



Balance your diet



Your physical activity & lifestyle



Your wellbeing

Your doctor may recommend medication to lower blood pressure to reduce your risk of a heart attack or stroke.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

Having a healthy lifestyle is important no matter your blood pressure reading is. You can make positive changes by improving your diet, being active, quitting smoking and reducing your alcohol intake to improve your heart health.

## HEALTHY EATING FOR YOUR HEART INCLUDES:



Plenty of **vegetables, fruits and wholegrains**



**Reduced fat dairy** such as unflavoured milk, yoghurt & cheese



Variety of **healthy protein sources** including fish and seafood, lean meat and poultry, legumes, nuts and seeds



**Healthy fat choices** with nuts, seeds, avocados, olives and their oils for cooking



**Herbs and spices** to flavour foods, instead of adding salt

**!** Eating a diet high in salt can lead to increases in blood pressure. Having more than 5 grams of salt per day increases your risk of heart disease and stroke.

## TIPS TO HELP REDUCE YOUR SALT INTAKE:

- Make **fresh foods** the main part of your diet
- Use **lemon juice, garlic, herbs and spices** to add flavour instead of salt
- Eat less bought cakes, biscuits and pastries. Also limit takeaway foods like hamburgers, pizza and hot chips
- Avoid processed meat (e.g. sausages and salami)

**Physical activity** also helps manage high blood pressure. Do at least 30-45 mins of moderate (e.g. brisk walking) or 15-30 mins of vigorous (e.g. running) physical activity on 5 or more days of the week.

## MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT:

It is important to maintain a healthy body weight because it can help lower your blood pressure and lower your risk of having a heart problem. If you carry extra weight around your middle (being apple-shaped) you are more at risk than if you are just overweight. The Heart Foundation recommends you aim for a waist measurement of less than:



If you do need to lose weight, speak with your doctor about how to do it in a healthy way.