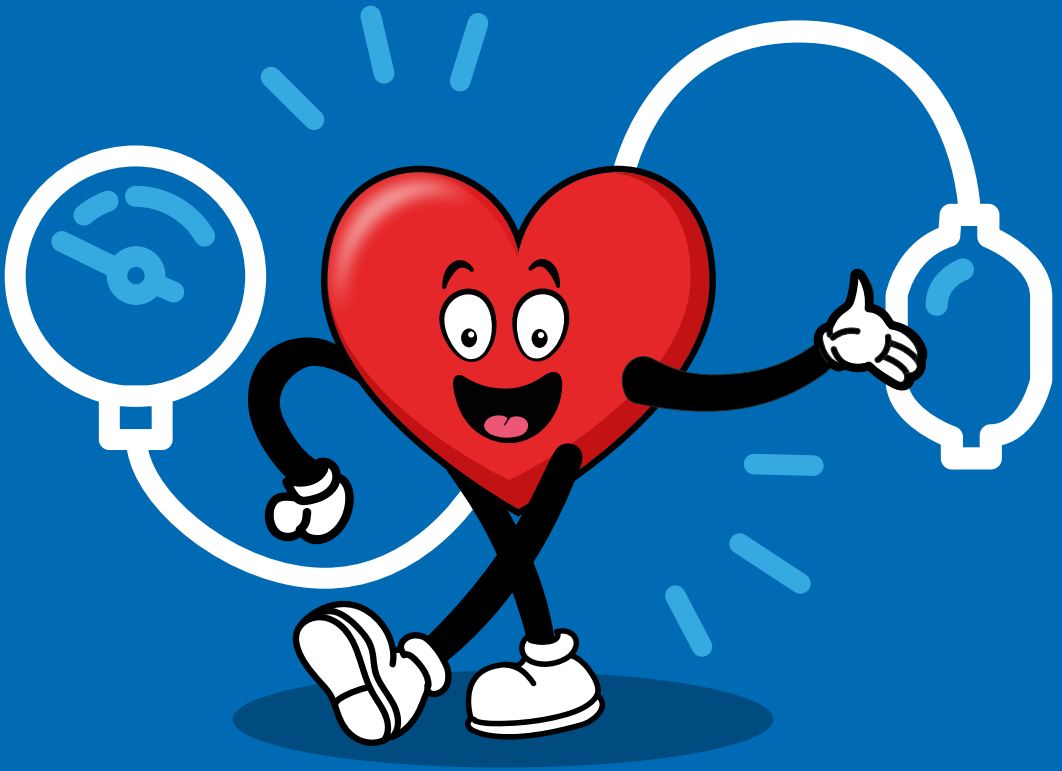


MORE THAN **ONE IN  
FOUR ADULTS** HAVE HIGH  
BLOOD PRESSURE



**KNOW YOUR NUMBERS AND  
WHAT THEY MEAN TO YOU!**

# What is blood pressure?

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW MY NUMBERS?

### Blood pressure is the pressure of blood in your arteries

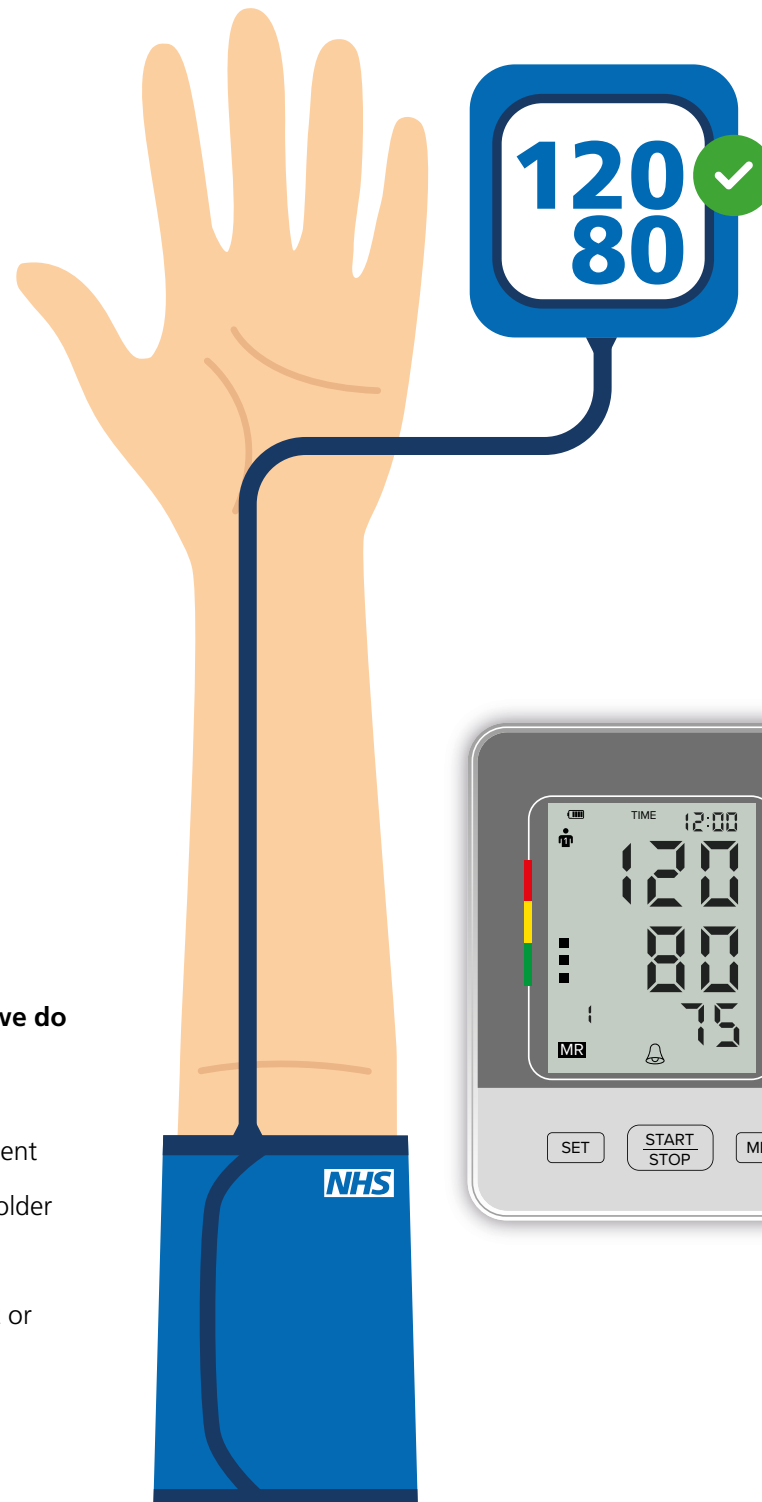
If it is too high over a period of time and is not treated, you could be more at risk of having a stroke or heart attack. It is also a risk factor for kidney disease, dementia and other illnesses. High blood pressure usually has no symptoms which is why many people don't know they have it.

The only way to find out, is to have regular checks and remember the numbers in the same way you would for your height and weight. If you have a raised blood pressure reading, you should not ignore it. High blood pressure is a serious condition but can be successfully treated.

### What causes high blood pressure

For most people the cause is unknown, however we do know that some factors make it more likely:

- A family history of high blood pressure
- If you are of African, Caribbean or South Asian descent
- Your age - blood pressure tends to climb as we get older
- Being overweight
- Certain lifestyle factors such as eating too much salt or drinking too much alcohol



### How is my blood pressure measured?

When you have your blood pressure measured it is written like this: 140/90mmHg, which is said "140 over 90". The first 'higher' number is your systolic pressure when your heart beats and pushes blood around your body.

The second 'lower' number is the diastolic pressure when your heart relaxes between beats. You need some pressure to keep your blood moving.

Your blood pressure naturally goes up and down, and it's fine for it to go up while you're moving about. It's when your overall blood pressure is always high, even when you are resting, that you need to do something about it.



### SYSTOLIC (Top number of your reading)

This is the highest level of your blood pressure – when your heart beats; it contracts to pump blood through your arteries.

### DIASTOLIC (Bottom number of your reading)

This is the lowest level of your blood pressure – when your heart relaxes between beats.

### PULSE

If your machine displays a pulse rate like this one does, this is the number of times your heart is beating per minute.

# Can I measure my blood pressure at home?

High blood pressure can only be diagnosed by your GP practice, but it's fine to monitor your blood pressure at home with a digital home blood pressure monitor. There are many monitors on the market, so have a look at different ones to see which you would prefer. For further advice on monitoring your blood pressure at home, you can go onto [www.bloodpressureuk.org](http://www.bloodpressureuk.org)

Remember if you purchase your own monitor, ideally, to be confident of the readings, it is advisable to replace it every five years.

Measure your blood pressure before eating, taking medication or vigorous exercise. Ensure you have an empty bladder and don't drink coffee or smoke within 30 minutes before your reading.

It is important that you only use validated machines that have been properly tested for accuracy. Finger and/or wrist blood pressure devices are not recommended.

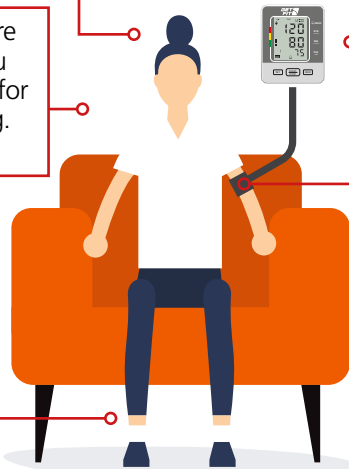
Don't measure your blood pressure if you feel uncomfortable or if you are stressed or in pain. Sit quietly for 5 minutes before taking a reading. Avoid talking during the reading.

Sit with your feet flat on the ground. Keep the top half of your arm bare and your back and arm supported and in a relaxed position.

Use a cuff that fits the top half of your arm properly. Sit in a relaxed position with the cuff at heart level.



Prior to starting home blood pressure monitoring, you should measure your blood pressure in both arms to determine which arm should be used for future measurements. The arm that gives the higher systolic reading (the top number) should be used for all future testing. Measure your blood pressure ideally for 7 days (minimum 5 days) at around the same time in the morning and in the evening. Each time you measure, take 2 readings, 1 minute apart.



# What the readings mean

## Low blood pressure (lower than 90/60mm/Hg)

This may be normal for you but seek advice from your GP practice within 48 hours if you have any of the following symptoms: light headedness, dizziness, feeling sick, blurred vision, generally feeling weak, confusion, fainting.

## Irregular pulse

If your monitor indicates that your pulse is irregular, seek advice from your GP practice within 48 hours, even if you have no symptoms. You should seek an immediate review at your GP practice or Walk-In Centre if you have symptoms such as chest pain, breathlessness, palpitations.

## Very fast or slow pulse

A normal resting pulse rate is 50-100 beats per minute. A slow pulse may be normal, e.g. in athletes, but you should seek advice from your GP practice if your pulse remains above 100 or below 50.

## Can't get a reading on your monitor?

Get your blood pressure checked at your local Pharmacy to make sure you find out your numbers. **Don't ignore it.**



# What can I do to lower my blood pressure?

There are lots of things you can do to lower your blood pressure or reduce your chances of getting high blood pressure. Here are some of the ways to keep your blood pressure under control:



Eat more fruit and vegetables



Be more active



Take blood pressure medication as prescribed



Drink alcohol in moderation



Lose weight if you need to



Don't add extra salt

Less than 6gms of salt per day is recommended (about a teaspoon) and many of our foods have hidden salt, so if you want to be sure, check the label

## Build healthy habits

Here are some simple swaps you can try, to get you started:



Crisps, chocolate or sweets



Fruit, unsalted, nuts or popcorn



Salt on food



Pepper, herbs and spices



Taking the lift



Taking the stairs



A leisurely stroll



A brisk walk



Stopping smoking can contribute towards lowering your blood pressure. Search 'stop smoking' in your area, on the Internet.

# Blood pressure readings and what they mean

BP Reading	What this means	Recommended action
140/90 or higher.	Your blood pressure may be too high and cause you future health problems.	Get further checks at your local Pharmacy or GP practice as advised.
Between 130/85 and 139/89.	Your blood pressure is on the high side of normal.	Think about lifestyle changes and get re-checked in 1 year.
Less than 130/85 and equal to or greater than 90/60.	Your blood pressure is healthy.	Get a re-check at least every 5 years.
Low BP reading: less than 90/60mm.	Your blood pressure may be on the low side and cause you symptoms such as lightheadedness, dizziness or fainting.	If experiencing symptoms report to GP practice within 48 hours, otherwise arrange routine appointment within 2 weeks.
Newly identified irregular heartbeat detected on machine.	Your heartbeat may be irregular which could increase your risk of having a stroke.	Report to GP practice within 48hrs. If experiencing chest pain, breathlessness or palpitations seek immediate medical attention.
Persistent fast or slow heart rate i.e. less than 50 or greater than 100 bpm.	Your heartbeat may be too quick, or too slow, and could cause you symptoms such as chest pain or breathlessness (fast) or fainting or dizziness (slow).	Report to GP practice, if experiencing symptoms do so within 48 hours.



Lancashire and  
South Cumbria  
Integrated Care Board

## Today I had my blood pressure checked

Date	My numbers were	Pulse rate
	/	
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## For more information

The NHS website is a great source of further information on all topics related to high blood pressure, we have also provided QR code links to our website the NHS website and other organisations.

[www.lancashireandsouthcumbria.icb.nhs.uk/](http://www.lancashireandsouthcumbria.icb.nhs.uk/)



[www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)



[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)



[www.healthierlsc.co.uk/healthyhearts/resources](http://www.healthierlsc.co.uk/healthyhearts/resources)