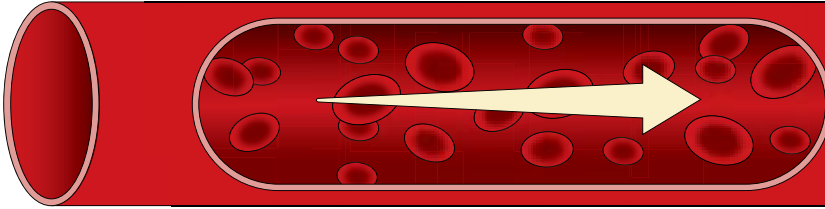
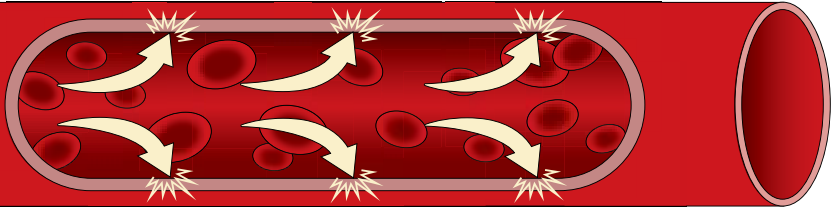


# Managing high blood pressure



Normal artery



Artery with high blood pressure

Most people don't know if they have high blood pressure as often there are no symptoms. This is why high blood pressure is known as the 'silent killer'.

The only way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to get it checked by your doctor or nurse.

## What is blood pressure?

When your heart beats it pumps blood to your body, via a network of blood vessels called arteries. As the heart beats, the blood pushes against the artery walls. The strength of this 'pushing' is your blood pressure.

High blood pressure (hypertension), occurs when the force on your artery walls is higher than recommended levels. This can lead to damaged arteries and increase your risk of:

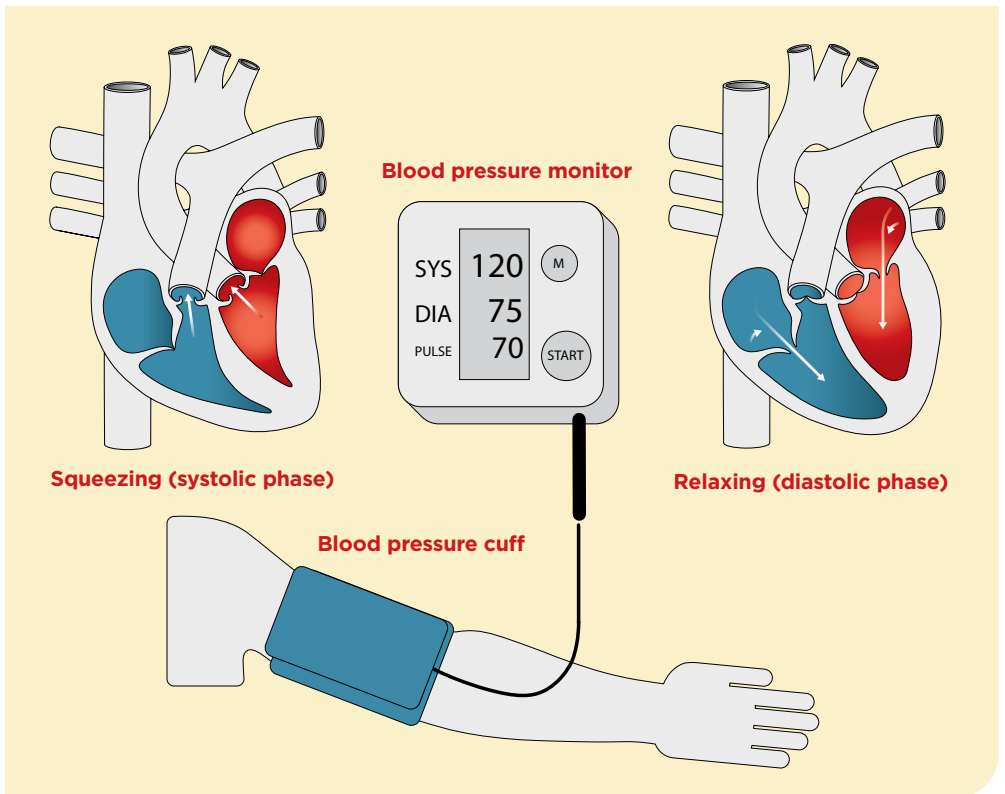
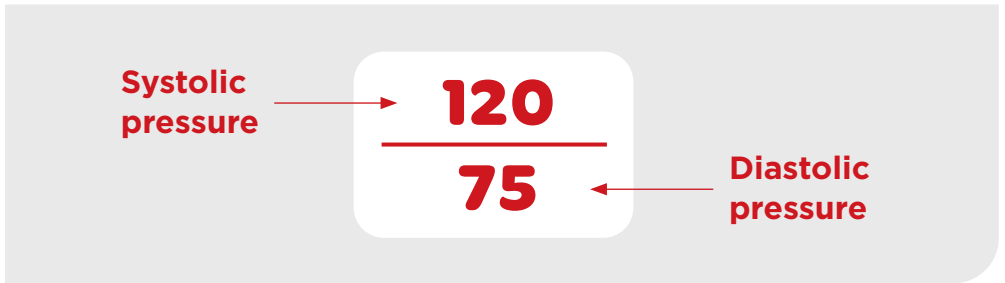
- heart attack
- stroke
- heart failure
- kidney and eye damage.

# How is blood pressure measured?

A blood pressure reading contains two numbers and will be written as a figure, such as **120/75**.

The first number is the pressure when your heart squeezes (**systolic pressure**).

The second number is when your heart relaxes (**diastolic pressure**).



# What causes high blood pressure?

The causes of high blood pressure are complex, but you're more likely to have it if you:



**eat too much salt and too many processed foods**



**smoke or vape with nicotine**



**drink too much alcohol too often**



**are overweight**



**are stressed**



**are sedentary**



**have diabetes**



**are getting older**



**take other medication**



**have kidney or glandular disease**



**have a parent with high blood pressure**

There are things you can do to help lower your blood pressure.

# Top tips for managing blood pressure

Talk with your doctor or nurse about what changes you can make to manage your blood pressure.

**Tick the boxes and commit to change.**



## Quit smoking

Stopping smoking is the best thing you can do for your blood pressure and health.

**Ask your doctor or nurse for help.**

**Phone Quitline 0800 778 778, or visit [quit.org.nz](http://quit.org.nz) for information and support.**



## Eat and drink for a healthy heart

**Eat real foods that are close to their natural state.**

**Eat less processed foods and salty takeaways.**

**Read food labels - less is best of the three S's - salt (sodium), sugar and saturated fat.**

**Take the salt shaker off the table.**

**When cooking, use herbs, spices, chilli, garlic, lemon or vinegar instead of salt.**

**Have at least 2 alcohol free days a week.**

**If you do drink alcohol, have a maximum of 1 to 2 drinks a day for women, and 2 to 3 drinks a day for men.**

**Drinking alcohol comes with risks to health, it contributes to high blood pressure, high cholesterol and weight gain. For some people with an underlying health and heart conditions, it may be best to avoid drinking alcohol altogether. Talk to your doctor about whether alcohol is safe for you.**

Want more heart-healthy eating information? Get our **'Eating for a healthy heart'** booklet, which is available from [heartfoundation.org.nz](http://heartfoundation.org.nz) or by phoning **0800 863 375**.



## Move more

- Sit less. Walk or bike rather than drive when possible.
- Take the stairs, not the lift.
- Get off the bus one stop early.
- Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity every day or do short bouts (5-15 minutes) of exercise more often during the day.



## Manage your weight

- Have a glass of water if you're hungry, thirst can often be mistaken for hunger.
- Eat mindfully and slowly – you will be less likely to overeat.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks like soft drinks, juices and energy drinks.
- Use a smaller-sized plate and sit down to eat.
- Serve a smaller portion.
- Fill up on non-starchy vegetables.



## Manage your stress

- Enjoy exercise every day.
- Take a break for yourself.
- Get 7-8 hours plus sleep each night.
- Talk about how you are feeling.
- Try relaxation music or breathing exercises.



## Keep taking your medication

Your medication reduces your risk of heart attack and stroke. Talk to your doctor before you change or stop your medication.

- Know what your medications do and any side effects.
- Set reminders to take your medication every day at the right time.
- Order a repeat prescription 2 weeks before you run out.
- If you are using supplements/herbal therapies, ask your doctor/pharmacist if they're safe for you.

# Your risk of heart attack and stroke

High blood pressure is one of a number of factors that can increase your risk of a heart attack and stroke. Some of these risk factors can be changed, while others cannot.

## Risk factors you can't change



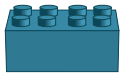
Family history of heart disease



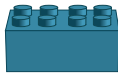
Personal history of heart disease



Gender



Ethnicity



Age

## Risk factors you can change



Smoking



High blood pressure



High cholesterol



Diabetes



Poor diet



Overweight



Not enough exercise

It's like building a tower out of blocks. Your risk factors are the blocks, but it's the tower that they build that's important. Your doctor or nurse can work out your overall risk by adding all of the risk factors together.

**My current risk of heart attack and stroke is:**

Low

Medium

High

%

By making changes to your lifestyle you can decrease your overall risk. Even a small change can have a positive impact on your health.

For more information, read our '**Lowering your risk of heart attack and stroke**' booklet, which is available from [heartfoundation.org.nz](http://heartfoundation.org.nz) or by phoning **0800 863 375**.

# What is an ideal blood pressure?

For most people an ideal blood pressure is 120/75, or lower.

If you are on medication for high blood pressure, the target blood pressure for most people is 130/80.

However, the blood pressure that is 'ideal' for you depends on many factors, including your overall risk of heart attack and stroke.

One 'high' reading doesn't mean you have high blood pressure.

Readings can vary depending on:

- **the time of day**
- **stress**
- **recent exercise**
- **consumption of caffeine, tobacco or alcohol.**

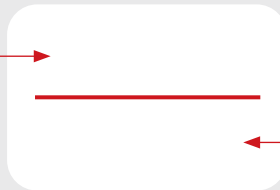
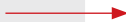
Your doctor may suggest you take your own blood pressure reading at home, or have a 24-hour blood pressure monitor test. This provides more information than a single reading in a clinic.

## Know your numbers

Talk to your doctor or nurse about what your result means and what the ideal blood pressure target is for you.

**My blood pressure target is:**

**Systolic  
pressure**



**Diastolic  
pressure**

**Some people get a high blood pressure reading because they are anxious about having their blood pressure taken, rather than because of an underlying medical problem. This is known as 'white coat hypertension' or 'white coat syndrome'.**

# You only have one life. You're in the driving seat to start the journey to a healthier you.

**Reducing your blood pressure will lower your risk of a heart attack and stroke. Get your blood pressure checked regularly by your doctor or nurse and discuss what steps you can take to improve your heart health.**

When thinking about your options, it is important to take into account what matters to you and your family. You are more likely to make changes with support. Think about the changes you'd like to make. How would it feel to do more exercise, change your eating habits, or drink less alcohol?

## Have you identified what changes you are going to make?

My next steps:

## My blood pressure is:

Date	BP Reading

## My blood pressure medication is:

For more information search 'blood pressure' on [heartfoundation.org.nz](http://heartfoundation.org.nz)

As a charity we thank our generous donors for helping bring this resource to life.

Revised January 2019. Information correct at time of printing.