

High Blood Pressure –

Your questions answered



Blood Pressure Association

Know your numbers!®

60 Cranmer Terrace
London SW17 0QS
0208 772 4994
www.bpassoc.org.uk

High Blood Pressure – Your questions answered



What does high blood pressure mean?

High blood pressure is when your blood pushes against the walls of your blood vessels more strongly than normal. The medical term for this is hypertension. This can put extra strain on your heart, kidneys and blood vessels, which may increase your risk of health problems in the future.

It is a serious condition but it can be treated and managed very successfully. Although being told you have high blood pressure can be worrying and confusing, there are many things that you can do to help lower your blood pressure and take control of it.



How did my doctor decide that I have it?

140/90mmHg is generally the level of blood pressure used to diagnose high blood pressure, whatever your age. If your blood pressure is raised at this level or above for a number of weeks you will be offered treatment.



Why have I got it?

That is a hard question to answer. High blood pressure is very common and can affect anyone of any age, of both sexes and of any ethnic group. It also tends to be more common as we get older. Lifestyle factors such as being overweight, not being active enough and eating too much salt can contribute to high blood pressure.

For roughly one in ten people with high blood pressure, there is another health problem that is causing it. Treating that health problem may lower their blood pressure.

However, for nine out of ten people with high blood pressure, there isn't a single, simple health problem that is causing it. For most of us, high blood pressure is caused by a wide range of different factors working together.



Why didn't I know I had it?

Although many people believe that high blood pressure causes headaches, a red face and nose bleeds, the truth is that it rarely causes any of these things. This is why there are several million people in the UK who have high blood pressure but don't know it because they feel completely well. The only way to find out is to have a blood pressure check.



Why does it need to be treated?

We know that treating and lowering your blood pressure successfully reduces the strain on your heart, kidneys and blood vessels. This will significantly lower your chances of having a stroke, heart attack or other serious health problems in the future, such as dementia. Also, if you have diabetes or kidney disease or have already had a heart attack or stroke it is even more important to lower your blood pressure.

Treating your high blood pressure is a bit like taking out an insurance policy for your future health: the lower you can get your blood pressure, the greater your chances of living to ripe old age.



What will happen if I ignore it?

High blood pressure slowly damages your blood vessels, heart and kidneys over a long period of time. If you ignore it, you may continue to feel well for some time but the damage inside will be building up.



What can I do about it?

High blood pressure is not usually something that you can cure, but it can be lowered very successfully. Millions of people in the UK have already successfully lowered their blood pressure and are helping to keep it down by making the following changes to their lifestyle:

- ♥ Eating less salt
- ♥ Eating more fruit and vegetables
- ♥ Being active
- ♥ Being the right weight
- ♥ Not drinking too much alcohol
- ♥ Taking tablets if necessary

Our free practical guides have helped thousands to lower their blood pressure. Register now for your free pack at www.bpassoc.org.uk or by calling 020 8772 4994 and pressing 2 followed by 1 to leave your details on our answerphone.



Will I be given tablets?

Blood pressure tablets are used to lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of developing a stroke or heart disease. So the need for tablets depends on how high your blood pressure is and whether or not you have other risk factors for developing a stroke or heart disease. For example, if you are a smoker, have a family history of stroke or heart disease, or have a high cholesterol level you may be asked to take tablets.

Most people take two or more tablets to treat their blood pressure. There is a simple guide for treating high blood pressure and combining different medicines that you and your doctor can follow. Further details are available from the Blood Pressure Association; please contact us or visit our website.



Will I have to be on treatment for life?

High blood pressure is a long-term problem that requires long-term treatment to keep it under control. For this reason most people find that they need to take tablets to keep their blood pressure down for the rest of their lives. However, a few people are able to bring their blood pressure down by really sticking to changes in their lifestyle and may be able to reduce or stop some of their tablets.



How can I find out more?

The Blood Pressure Association is the UK charity for people with high blood pressure and we have a wide range of resources to help you:

- ♥ A free membership information pack to help you get started. To become a free member of the BPA, please visit our website or call us, please see below.
- ♥ A website with many pages on how you can take control of your blood pressure.
- ♥ A quarterly subscription magazine – *Positive Pressure* – which is full of practical articles on lowering blood pressure, the latest research and other people's experiences of high blood pressure. To subscribe, please contact us or visit our website.



Get your free membership and info pack:

Via the Internet

Register at www.bpassoc.org.uk
Please quote Ref: Q&A sheet

By phone:

Call 020 8772 4994 – then press 2 followed by 1
After the answerphone message, please leave your name and address.
Please quote Q&A sheet