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Video: How to reduce blood pressure

A collection of frequently asked questions about blood pressure, answered by our experts. Why is it such a major contributing factor to heart disease and what lifestyle changes might you need to adopt if yours is high?

What is considered high blood pressure?

Dr Yassir Javaid, GP, Cardiology Specialist

To have high blood pressure, your blood pressure needs to be high most of the time. That means a reading of 135/85 mm Hg if you're taking a reading at home, or 140/90 mm Hg if it's done at the surgery. That doesn't necessarily mean you need treatment, unless you have other risk factors such as previously having a [heart attack](#), [diabetes](#) or [kidney disease](#).

If your blood pressure is significantly higher than that – so more than 160/100 mm Hg at your GP surgery or 150/95 mm Hg at home – then perhaps we should be considering treatment, even if you don't have any other risk factors. There are lots of things you can do to reduce your blood pressure by adopting a healthy lifestyle and medication on top of that if required.

How serious is high blood pressure?

Dr Yassir Javaid, GP, Cardiology Specialist

High blood pressure can be serious, if it's high most of the time. Having a high one-off blood pressure reading may not be of much concern because we know that blood pressure can fluctuate throughout the day and even between days.

That's why it's so important to check your blood pressure on a daily basis for at least a week, twice a day. And probably twice at each sitting, ignoring that first reading. Having a blood pressure that's high all of the time or an average blood pressure reading of more than 135/85 mm Hg can increase your risk of having a heart attack or a stroke.

What can you do to lower your blood pressure?

Dr Yassir Javaid, GP, Cardiology Specialist

It's really important to lower your blood pressure because having a consistently high blood pressure does increase your risk of serious disease.

Thankfully there are lots of simple things that you can do, like being more active. The advice is to do 30 minutes of exercise per day for around five days to a week, and you can break that down into portions of ten minutes. That will also help with weight loss which is another important thing to address to help lower blood pressure.

In terms of the diet we know that reducing your salt intake to just one teaspoon a day (approximately 6 g) can also really help keep that blood pressure down.

Can you test your blood pressure at home?

Dr Yassir Javaid, GP, Cardiology Specialist

I would strongly encourage taking your blood pressure at home. In fact there is really good evidence that taking your blood pressure at home on a regular basis is a far more accurate reflection of your day-to-day blood pressure than, for instance, having a one-off reading taken at your GP surgery.

Having your blood pressure taken at the surgery is probably the worst time, because you may have waited 30 minutes in a very busy and noisy waiting room, and that anxiety can drive up your blood pressure. So the advice is now to take your blood pressure twice a day for at least a week, twice at each time. Ignore the first reading because it's always going to be high because of the stress of just taking your blood pressure.

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