

A photograph of a smiling Black man with a bald head, wearing a light blue zip-up jacket over a white shirt. He is standing outdoors with green foliage in the background.

Invincible feeling



Invisible danger

Take a sec to check

Blood pressure

A guide to why knowing your blood pressure is important and how to check it at home.

www.midandsouthessex.ics.nhs.uk/bp

Why check your blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the strength of your blood pushing against your blood vessels as it moves around your body. But if your blood pressure is too high, it can be harmful. High blood pressure, also called 'hypertension', means that your blood is pushing too hard on your blood vessels. This makes your heart work harder and can lead to serious health issues.

High blood pressure has no symptoms. Many people feel perfectly fine despite having this health problem. This "**invincible feeling invisible danger**" means that serious damage can occur to your heart, blood vessels and organs without warning.

High blood pressure is common in the UK. **It affects one in four adults**, and many people don't know they have it. Checking your blood pressure can help keep you healthy and prevent problems like heart attacks and strokes.

It's important to **know your blood pressure numbers** to make sure they are healthy.

Who should check?

We recommend you **check your blood pressure at home**, at your local pharmacy or at your GP surgery if you:

- have had a high blood pressure reading
- have a health condition that could raise your blood pressure
- have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (hypertension)
- have a family history of high blood pressure
- are over 40 years old and haven't checked your blood pressure in the last five years.

What is normal blood pressure?

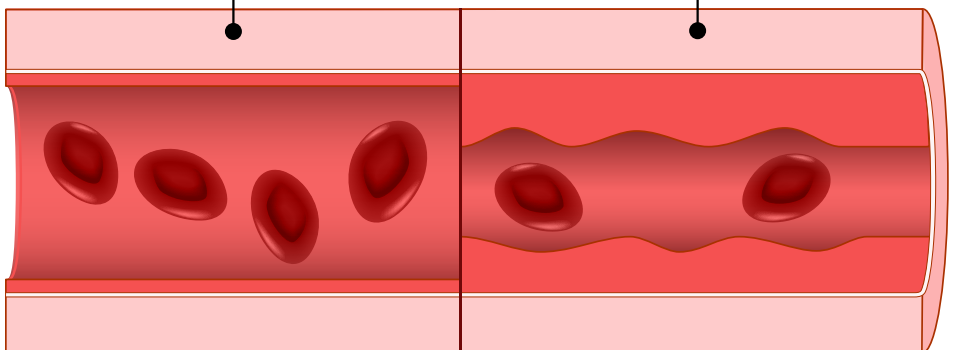
When you have your blood pressure measured, your reading is written as two numbers. For example, your reading will be something like 130/85.

Most people have blood pressure between **90/60 and 120/80**. For people over the age of 80, the ideal blood pressure is under 150/90 (or 145/85 at home). Your doctor or pharmacist can help you know what's healthy for you.

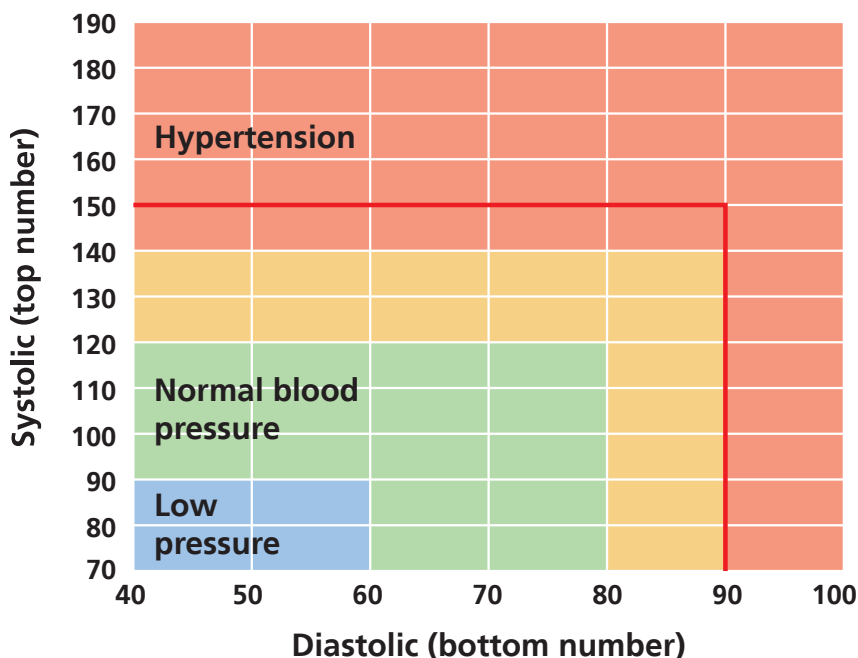
If your blood pressure is between 120/80 and 140/90, **you may be at risk** of developing high blood pressure in the future. There are things you can do to help prevent high blood pressure, such as making lifestyle changes.

Normal - when the pressure in the blood vessels is within a healthy range. The blood vessel walls are flexible and have a normal thickness, allowing them to expand and contract as needed.

Hypertension - high blood pressure in the blood vessels, which causes the walls to thicken and their inner space to narrow. This restricts blood flow and can lead to serious health issues.



Blood pressure ranges



— High blood pressure for people over the age of 80

Knowing when to check

Your blood pressure **naturally goes up and down** during the day as you go about your day-to-day activities. But if your blood pressure stays high even when you are resting, it's important to take action.

If you are taking your blood pressure at home, it's best to check **over seven days**, checking twice in the morning and twice at night. Try to avoid eating, exercising or having any caffeine or nicotine before you take your readings.

How to monitor your blood pressure

If you're over 40, you can get a free blood pressure check at many pharmacies. Search "**pharmacy blood pressure check**" online to see local pharmacies you can have your blood pressure checked at.

Some GP surgeries have machines you can use in their waiting rooms, too.

You can buy a blood pressure monitor to use at home. This allows you to check your blood pressure easily, in the place where you **feel most comfortable**. If you are checking your blood pressure at home, follow these simple steps.

1. Sit **comfortably** with your legs uncrossed and back supported.
2. Place the cuff on your **bare upper arm** (not over clothing), about 2–3cm above your elbow.
3. Make sure the tube from the cuff is at the **centre of the front** of your arm.
4. Keep your arm resting at **heart level**.
5. Press the button to take a reading.
6. Take another reading as the **first is often higher**. If your two readings are very different, take another two readings.
7. Note the lowest of the readings on the **last page of this leaflet** as your GP may want to see these if your blood pressure remains high.

Scan the QR code to watch our instructive video and find other helpful resources to manage your blood pressure.



Ways to reduce your blood pressure

Here are some ways to keep your blood pressure at a healthy level:



Get active



Stop smoking



Reduce alcohol



Eat a balanced diet



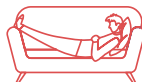
Maintain a healthy weight



Reduce salt intake



Attend NHS 40+ Health Checks



Relax and de-stress



Take medication as prescribed

For more information on ways to keep your blood pressure healthy scan the **QR code on the previous page**.

Recording your blood pressure

Use the **table on the opposite page** to write down your blood pressure numbers. Make sure the numbers match what you see on the monitor. Don't change them to be higher or lower. If something happened that might change your reading, like feeling sick or taking new medication, write it in the notes section. You don't need to write down your heart rate.

Calculating your blood pressure

Calculate an average of your readings by adding up all the top (systolic) readings and dividing by the number of measurements taken. Repeat this for the bottom (diastolic) readings.

Systolic / diastolic reading

Day	Time	1st reading	2nd reading	Notes
EXAMPLE				
AM	10.03am	top no. bottom	135 82	Felt a bit dizzy
Day 1 date:				
AM				
PM				
Day 2 date:				
AM				
PM				
Day 3 date:				
AM				
PM				
Day 4 date:				
AM				
PM				

Days 5-7 on next page

Day	Time	Reading 1	Reading 2	Notes
Day 5 date:				
AM				
PM				
Day 6 date:				
AM				
PM				
Day 7 date:				
AM				
PM				
		Average readings		

*Days 1-4 on
previous page*

Two readings over 180/120 in one day means very high blood pressure. If you have chest pain, face/arm weakness or speech problems, call 999 or go to A&E (do not drive yourself). Without symptoms, you should get an urgent same-day GP appointment. Don't ignore this reading.



Over $\frac{180}{120}$
Very High

Your seven-day average blood pressure reading is high. Please visit a pharmacy or GP within two weeks. If you're over 80 years old, a blood pressure reading over 150/90 is considered high.



Over $\frac{140}{90}$
High

Your blood pressure reading is healthy. You should have a check at least every five years, or sooner if you feel unwell.



Less than $\frac{120}{80}$
Healthy