

HYPERTENSION (HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE)

What it is / who it affects

Hypertension means your blood pressure is consistently higher than normal. It is very common, especially as people get older. Many people have no symptoms, but it increases your risk of serious health problems if untreated.

Causes or risks

You are more likely to develop high blood pressure if you:

- Have a family history of hypertension
- Are overweight
- Eat a lot of salt
- Drink too much alcohol
- Do not exercise regularly
- Smoke
- Are over 65
- Have conditions such as diabetes or kidney disease

Symptoms & red flags

Most people do not notice any symptoms. Occasionally, very high blood pressure can cause:

- Headaches
- Blurred vision
- Nosebleeds
- Shortness of breath or chest pain (urgent)

Diagnosis & tests

Blood pressure is measured with a cuff around your arm. A diagnosis is usually made after several readings, sometimes with home or 24-hour monitoring. Your GP may also check blood and urine tests, weight, and heart function.



Blood pressure is generally considered high if:

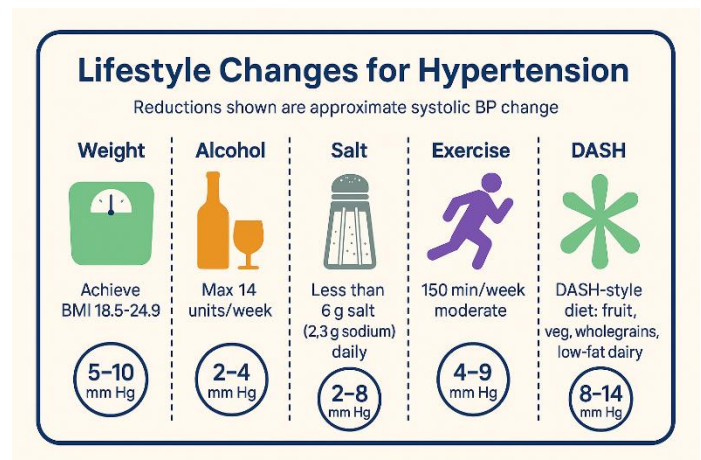
- **140/90 mmHg or above** when measured in the clinic
- **135/85 mmHg or above** on average at home

Typical targets	
Under 80 Clinic under 140/90 Home/24-hr under 135/85	80 or over Clinic under 150/90 Home/24-hr under 145/85

Treatment & self-help

Lifestyle changes are often the first step:

- Eat **at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables** daily
- Keep salt intake **below 6g a day (about 1 teaspoon)**
- Aim for **150 minutes of moderate activity a week** (e.g. brisk walking, cycling)
- Limit alcohol (14 units or fewer per week, with at least 2 alcohol-free days)
- Stop smoking
- Cut down on caffeine
- Aim for a healthy weight (BMI 18.5–24.9)
- Manage stress and get good sleep



If these are not enough, or if your blood pressure is very high, your GP may prescribe tablets. You may need to take them long term.

Complications & prognosis

Untreated high blood pressure over a sustained period increases the risk of:

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Heart failure
- Kidney disease
- Dementia

With treatment and lifestyle changes, most people live a normal life expectancy and reduce their risk of complications.

Home monitoring

Checking your blood pressure at home gives a more accurate picture:

- Take 2 readings, morning and evening, for **4–7 days**
- Ignore the first day's readings and calculate the average of the rest
- If your average is high, or you are concerned, please send your readings to us via our **online triage form**
- If we have not recorded a blood pressure for you in the last 6–12 months, please send us an average reading to keep your record up to date

(If you prefer a written log, ask us to print you off or email you the Arden's template.)

Home Blood Pressure
Green – Monitor Average home BP under 135/85. Routine monitoring.
Amber – Contact GP/Nurse Average 135/85 to 179/119 or rising trend. Book an appointment.
Red – Urgent Any reading 180/120 or higher, or red-flag symptoms. Contact duty team now. Call 999 if severe.

Practical tips & safety notes

- For home monitoring, use a validated device and the correct cuff size for your arm.
- Before taking a reading, avoid caffeine, smoking, or exercise for 30 minutes. Sit quietly for 5 minutes with your back supported, feet flat, and your arm at heart level.
- Bring your home monitor to the surgery once a year so we can compare it with ours.
- **Pregnancy:** If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, please contact your GP or midwife before making any changes to blood pressure tablets.
- **Salt substitutes:** If you have kidney disease or take certain tablets (such as ACE inhibitors or ARBs), avoid potassium-based salt substitutes unless a clinician has advised they are safe for you.

Follow-up & monitoring

If you are on treatment, your blood pressure is usually reviewed at least once a year. You may need more frequent checks when medicines are changed, or if you have another condition such as kidney disease, diabetes, or heart problems.

When to seek help

Most people can safely keep monitoring at home. Contact the surgery (or use our triage form) if you have new symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, blurred vision, or side effects. Call 999 if you have chest pain that does not go away, stroke symptoms (face, arm, speech), or severe breathlessness. Use NHS 111 if you are unsure or have chest pain that comes and goes.

Further reading & resources

- **NHS:** High blood pressure (hypertension)
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/>
- **British Heart Foundation:** Blood pressure
<https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/risk-factors/high-blood-pressure>
- **Blood Pressure UK**
<https://www.bloodpressureuk.org/>
- **Patient.info:** High blood pressure
<https://patient.info/heart-health/high-blood-pressure-hypertension>

If you have further questions:

- **Visit:** www.cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk/contact-us and fill out our triage form
- **Call us:** 01285 653198 or 01285 652122
- **Call NHS 111** if you need urgent medical advice (24/7)
- **Call 999** in an emergency

