



Two numbers that could save your life

High blood pressure is often referred to as 'the silent killer' due to its lack of obvious symptoms. It is directly responsible for around half of all strokes and heart attacks, and is a major risk factor for other serious health conditions such as heart failure, kidney disease, dementia and type 2 diabetes.

It's also extremely common, affecting around one in three adults in the UK. Half of these people (around 8 million) are either unaware they have high blood pressure or their high blood pressure isn't being treated.

Despite this, high blood pressure is highly preventable. That's why it's key to find out what your blood pressure is.

Know your numbers!

Know Your Numbers Week is the UK's biggest annual blood pressure testing and awareness event and it's taking place from **5-11 September**. The theme this year is **Measure, Modify, Manage**:

- **Measure** your blood pressure to see if it's under control.
- **Modify** your lifestyle if necessary.
- **Manage** your blood pressure and your health.

Taking the first step

To **arrange a blood pressure check** you can make an appointment with your GP, practice nurse or your local pharmacy. The practitioner will be able to offer advice on how to maintain a healthy blood pressure.

You can also **measure your blood pressure yourself** using a home blood pressure monitor. This method allows you to take your measurement in the comfort of your own home, making it easier to monitor your readings on a regular basis.

What do the numbers mean?

Blood pressure is represented by two numbers which indicate the highest and lowest pressure the blood exerts against the artery walls as the heart repeatedly contracts and relaxes during the heartbeat cycle.

The pressures are expressed as the highest (systolic) over the lowest (diastolic). An ideal (normal) blood pressure is **90/60 - 120/80**. Above these levels is elevated blood pressure, and if your numbers are **140/90 or higher** then you are likely to have high blood pressure.

Take the pressure off

Raised blood pressure usually responds well to lifestyle changes. If you find that your numbers are raised, you can start to take control by following our six steps:

- **Maintain a healthy weight** - keep your BMI under 25.0 (or 23.0 if you're of South Asian or Chinese descent).
- **Follow a healthy diet** - particularly high in wholegrains, fruits and vegetables and low in salt/sodium and unhealthy fats.
- **Keep physically active** - at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity each week.
- **Avoid smoking** - if you smoke then stopping should be one of your top health priorities.
- **Keep your alcohol intake within the lower risk limit** - that means no more than 14 units per week.
- **Reduce stress** – exercise, practicing mindfulness, getting adequate sleep and making time to relax can all help to manage stress.