

Health and wellbeing fact sheet

Know your numbers!!

One in three adults in the UK has high blood pressure, yet a third of those who have the condition don't even know it, because it usually has no symptoms. Untreated it can cause a stroke, heart attack and heart failure. Both lifestyle changes and medication can help to control your blood pressure.

- **What is blood pressure?** Blood pressure is a measure of the force with which the blood presses on the walls of the arteries as it is pumped around the body. This pumping action is driven by your heart which beats, on average, around 70 to 80 times a minute and pumps the blood to the arteries and out to various parts of the body. A healthy blood pressure should be consistently below 140/90. The optimal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mmHg.
- **What is high blood pressure?** Your blood pressure varies throughout the day. It can go down if you are asleep or sitting quietly, and can go up if you are rushing about or stressed. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, develops when the pressure of the blood running through the vessels is consistently too high. A person is usually considered to have high blood pressure if they have a measurement that is consistently above 140/90 mmHg (or 130/80 if you have diabetes). The higher your blood pressure the greater your risk of developing medical conditions. The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have it measured by a Nurse or Doctor, who can then advise and prescribe you treatment.

A healthy lifestyle to lower your blood pressure

- **Know your risk** - Family history of coronary heart disease, smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol, lack of activity and obesity can all increase your chances of getting coronary heart disease.
- **Eat a healthy diet and keep to a healthy weight** - make sure you include the recommended five portions a day of fruit and vegetables in your diet and cut down on the bad fats e.g. saturated fats (animal fat), sugar and salt.
- **Get moving!** Make sure you get your recommended thirty minutes of exercise five times a week. Try taking the stairs rather than a lift or get off the bus a stop earlier!
- **Stop smoking** – The toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke damage blood vessel walls, leading to narrowing and furring of the arteries and increased stickiness of the blood, which increases the risk of blood clots forming in major arteries to the brain and heart.
- **Drink Sensibly** - Avoid binge drinking and stick to recommended alcohol guidelines. No more than three to four units per day for a man, or two to three for a woman.
- **Reduce your stress levels** – Take time to relax, with activities such as yoga, listening to calming music, meditation, relaxation techniques and deep breathing exercises.

Further information is available on www.bpassoc.org.uk Blood Pressure Association
