

Hypertension

What is Hypertension?

Hypertension is the medical term for high blood pressure. Blood pressure is how hard your blood pushes against the walls of your blood vessels. Blood pressure is written as two numbers (e.g. a normal blood pressure is 120/80). The top number is the pressure when the heartbeats and the bottom is the pressure when the heart rests between beats. Blood pressure problems can start when the top number over is over 130 or the second number is over 80.

If you have high blood pressure all of the time, it can damage your heart because it's working harder for longer. Your heart muscles can change over time, getting bigger to cope being under high pressure. Because the enlarged muscle takes up so much room in our hearts, it makes the amount of oxygenated blood flowing through our bodies less.

Many things cause constant high blood pressure. Some of these factors can be controlled, and some cannot.

Things that can be controlled:

- Smoking tobacco
- Alcohol intake
- Being inactive, no regular exercise
- An unhealthy diet including salty foods and unhealthy fats
- High cholesterol – the buildup in your arteries make it harder for blood to be pushed through them.

Things that cannot be controlled:

- Family history of high blood pressure
- Getting older
- Gender - males are more likely to have high blood pressure)
- Being Indigenous - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are more likely to have high blood pressure than non-Indigenous Australians.

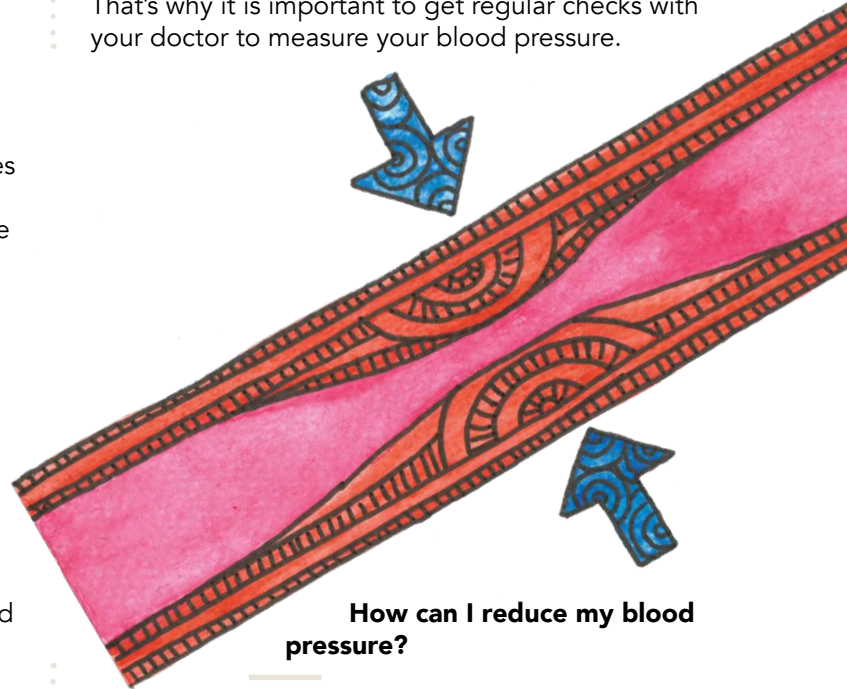
What can high blood pressure do to our bodies?

High blood pressure is serious and will increase your risk of:

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Kidney disease.

How do I feel/what do I look like with Hypertension?

There are no obvious signs of high blood pressure. That's why it is important to get regular checks with your doctor to measure your blood pressure.



How can I reduce my blood pressure?

You can lower your blood pressure with simple changes to your lifestyle:

- Getting regular blood pressure checks with your doctor. Your blood pressure can increase due to stress, emotions, recent exercise, drinking coffee, or even talking. So your doctor might want it checked a few times to get the average number.
- If you are over 18, you should be getting your blood pressure checked at least every two years, and over 35 years your doctor will do a heart disease risk check and blood pressure checks as part of your annual health review
- Eating a healthy diet with more vegetables and fruit
- Reducing salt and unhealthy fats
- Reducing caffeine and cola drinks
- Relaxation, connecting to country and culture
- Exercising at least 30 minutes 5 times a week
- Cut back on your alcohol if drinking more than ten standard drinks per week
- If you smoke, talk to your doctor about quitting smoking
- Get your cholesterol checked with regular blood tests.

If your blood pressure is high, your doctor may recommend medications to help bring it down, to reduce damage to your heart and putting you at risk for heart disease or stroke.