

### If I have high blood pressure, what should I do?

If you have high blood pressure, your doctor may suggest dietary and lifestyle changes such as:

- losing excess weight,
- limiting your alcohol intake to two standard drinks or less if a male or one standard drink if a female,
- doing regular physical activity,
- reducing your fat and salt intake, and
- being a non-smoker

If changes to your lifestyle do not reduce your blood pressure, or if your blood pressure is very high, your doctor can prescribe medications. These medications will lower your blood pressure, and in most cases, will need to be taken for the rest of your life. To be effective you must take the right dose and follow your doctor's and pharmacist's instructions. If you experience any side effects while taking blood pressure medication, report these to your doctor or pharmacist immediately.

Yes I want to help in the fight against kidney disease and support Kidney Health Australia

### How can people with high blood pressure help themselves?

Understand your medication management and take them exactly as prescribed.

Do not stop taking your medications on your own accord—this can be dangerous.

Follow the recommendations given by your doctor about possible lifestyle and dietary changes.

Use community resources and programs such as the Quit Line (131848), weight reduction and physical activity programs to help you with lifestyle changes.

You may also like to encourage other family members, to increase their physical activity and eat a healthy diet.

Ask your doctor if it is okay for you to record your own blood pressure readings. You may even consider monitoring and recording your own blood pressure at home. These home readings of your blood pressure should be taken to your doctor and will assist in good decision making about your blood pressure—some people have high readings only in the doctors office—a 'white coat' syndrome.

You and your doctor will need to work together to keep your blood pressure under control. It is important to remember that blood pressure can be controlled and successfully treated. Early detection and long-term treatment are the keys to a longer healthier life by preventing kidney failure.

# BLOOD PRESSURE



For more information about kidney and urinary health, please contact Kidney Health Australia:

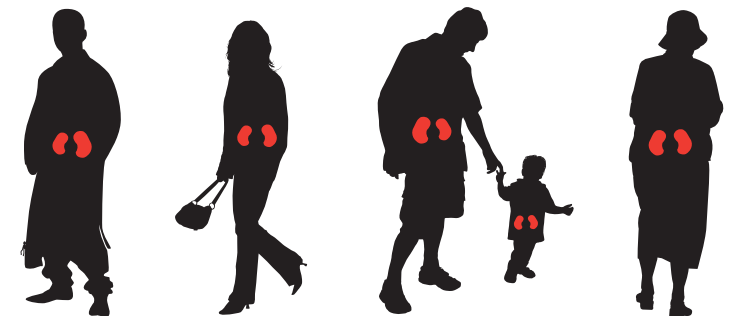
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# Kidneys & Blood Pressure



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# KIDNEYS &

Blood pressure can be measured in a variety of ways but the standard method is using an arm cuff and a stethoscope. It is recorded as two numbers e.g. 130/70. The first number is the systolic reading. This is the pressure in the arteries as the heart pumps out blood during a beat. The second number is the diastolic reading, which is the pressure of the blood in the arteries when the heart relaxes before the next beat. Both numbers of your blood pressure are important.

## How do we measure blood pressure?

## What is blood pressure?

Blood is carried from the heart to all parts of your body through tubes called arteries. Blood pressure is the pressure of the blood against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps the blood around the body.

## What is a normal blood pressure reading?

Since blood pressure varies from person to person and for each person during the day, there are no fixed rules about what blood pressure reading is 'normal'. These figures can be a useful guide:

BLOOD PRESSURE	
NORMAL	<120/80
HIGH NORMAL	120–139/80–89
HIGH	>140/90

A single high reading is not enough to make a diagnosis of 'high blood pressure'. You need to have a series of high readings taken on several different days, at different times, before high blood pressure—often called 'hypertension'—can be confirmed.

## Does blood pressure stay the same?

No, your blood pressure does not stay the same. Your blood pressure changes to meet the demands of your body. It is usually at its highest when we exercise and lowest when we sleep. It can also rise due to anxiety, excitement, activity or nervousness.

## How will I know that my blood pressure is high?

Although some people with high blood pressure can get headaches, dizziness or nosebleeds, high blood pressure does not always give warning signs. Often high blood pressure is found accidentally. The only way to know if your blood pressure is high is to have it checked regularly by your doctor. You may have high blood pressure and feel perfectly well.

If blood pressure is left uncontrolled and remains high, it can damage the vessels that supply blood to your internal organs. The very small vessels are often the first to be affected. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for coronary heart disease, stroke, heart failure, peripheral vascular disease and kidney disease.

## Is high blood pressure related to kidney disease?

Yes, high blood pressure is closely related to kidney disease in a couple of different ways.

High blood pressure can cause kidney damage and kidney damage can cause high blood pressure.

The kidneys produce a hormone called renin; this helps to control blood pressure in the body. If your kidneys aren't functioning properly, renin release can be increased, raising the blood pressure.

If high blood pressure is left unchecked, it can cause blood vessels in your kidneys to become thickened and narrowed. This can affect your blood supply to the kidneys and, as a result, your kidney function. Uncontrolled blood pressure may cause severe or total kidney failure.

High blood pressure can develop as a result of almost all kidney diseases. A narrowing of the main artery to one or both kidneys can also cause high blood pressure; this is called renal artery stenosis. If you have kidney failure, salt and fluid retention can also cause high blood pressure.

## What's so bad about high blood pressure?

## What are the other potential causes of high blood pressure?

The causes of high blood pressure can vary. In 90% of cases, no underlying cause is found.

Some people are at greater risk of developing high blood pressure than others. These can include:

- older people,
- people with a family history of high blood pressure,
- people who are overweight, and
- smoking, high cholesterol, too much fat and salt in the diet, over use of alcohol and not enough physical activity can also increase the risk of high blood pressure or make its effects more serious.

High blood pressure can occasionally be caused by a problem in an endocrine gland, such as the adrenal gland. These cases are fairly rare and can be cured by treatment. Certain drugs such as birth control pills, decongestants and diet pills can also raise blood pressure. Your doctor can give you advice on these issues.

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