

# Blood pressure and diabetes

## What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is a measure of the pressure of the blood in your arteries as it is pumped around your body by the heart.

## How is blood pressure measured?

Blood pressure is measured by a sphygmomanometer and is recorded as a fraction eg 130/80.

The higher number (systolic) records the pressure of the artery as the heart pushes out blood during each beat eg **130/80**.

The lower number (diastolic) records the pressure of the artery as the heart relaxes between beats eg **130/80**.

## What is normal blood pressure?

As a guide, blood pressure between 110/70 and 130/80 is considered as having good blood pressure control.

## What causes high blood pressure?

One of the main causes of high blood pressure is the build up of fat on the inner walls of the arteries. This causes loss of some of the elasticity of the artery wall. High blood pressure may run in families, as it is influenced by genetics. Lifestyle factors can also play a role, these include:

- Being inactive
- Having a high alcohol intake
- Being overweight
- Stress
- Smoking
- Having a high salt intake

High blood pressure can also be affected by:

- Kidney problems
- High cholesterol

Diabetes and high blood pressure are often found together.

Research has shown that good management of blood pressure is extremely important in decreasing the risk of:

- Stroke
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Eye disease
- Nerve damage
- Erectile dysfunction

High blood pressure may not give any warning signs and therefore should be checked at each visit to your doctor or community health nurse.

## How do I reduce my blood pressure?

- Lose excess weight – even a small weight loss can make a difference
- Maintain regular physical activity
- Follow the Australian Dietary Guidelines
- Don't smoke
- Alcohol – following the "Drink Safe" guidelines

Medications may be necessary to help reduce blood pressure. Optimise the affect of your medication by maintaining healthy eating and physical activity.

## When should I get my blood pressure checked?

Your blood pressure should be checked at every doctor's visit or at least 3-4 times per year.

## Diabetes and good health

This is your guide to managing your diabetes and includes a list of regular checks to maintain good health.

**Step 1:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise on most, preferably all, days of the week. For additional benefits, including weight management, aim for 60-90 minutes.

**Step 2:** Monitor your blood glucose levels and see your GP every 3-6 months.

**Step 3:** Follow a healthy eating plan (low in fat, particularly saturated fat, high in fibre containing quality carbohydrates).

**Step 4:** Be aware of how stress affects your health and develop strategies to deal with it.

**Step 5:** Have your blood pressure and cholesterol checked and treated if high.

**Step 6:** Don't smoke. If you need assistance to quit, call 131 848 or visit [www.quitnow.info.au](http://www.quitnow.info.au).

**Step 7:** If you drink alcoholic beverages, follow the "Drink Safe" guidelines.

**Step 8:** Check your feet daily for any changes and have your feet examined every 6 months by a podiatrist, credentialed diabetes educator or doctor.

**Step 9:** Have regular eye examinations every 12 months including retinal screening.

**Step 10:** Have your kidneys checked (urine sample) every 12 months.

*Develop a plan with your GP to ensure you keep up to date with these checks!*

