

Testing your blood pressure at home

With the libraries blood pressure
monitor loan scheme in Hampshire
and the Isle of Wight



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What is blood pressure?

As your heart beats, it pumps blood around your body. Your blood pressure is the strength of the blood pushing against the walls of your blood vessels as it moves.

It is measured with two numbers. One, the highest pressure and two, the lowest pressure as the heart pumps the blood around the body and then relaxes.

You may see it written like this:

118/72mmHg or **90/40mmHG**

The healthy or ideal adult blood pressure is considered to be between:

90/60mmHg or **90/40mmHG**

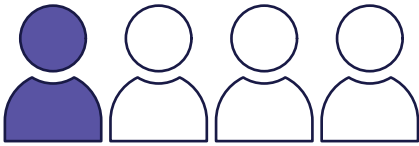
How do I know if I have high blood pressure?

High blood pressure rarely has noticeable symptoms and around **one in four adults in the UK has high blood pressure**, although many will not know it.

The only way to find out if your blood pressure is high, is to have it checked with a blood pressure machine. This leaflet will help you to do this and then to understand the results.

Why is high blood pressure a problem?

If your blood pressure is too high, it puts strain on your heart and blood vessels. This is called **high blood pressure** or **hypertension**. If untreated, it increases your risk of **serious health problems** including heart attacks, strokes, kidney disease and dementia.



High blood pressure affects more than **1 IN 4 ADULTS** in England.



At least **HALF** of all heart attacks and strokes are associated with high blood pressure.



For every ten people who are diagnosed with high blood pressure, seven remain **UNDIAGNOSED**

High blood pressure is a **MAJOR RISK FACTOR** for heart disease, strokes, chronic kidney disease and dementia.



Taking action to lower blood pressure, has been shown to reduce these health risks.

Source Health Matters: High blood pressure in England

How do I measure my blood pressure?



Please read the manual which is supplied with the machine carefully before using it. Or you can access the manual through the QR code here.

- This blood pressure machine is intended only for adults to use.
- Please do not use this device if you are pregnant or have an implanted electrical device fitted, such as a pacemaker.



Aspects adapted from the British Heart Foundation online guide, NHS Choices and Kinetik Wellbeing machine manual.

One



Check the memory is clear

To do this you should press the **MEM** button to enter the memory mode, then press and hold the **SET** button.

The **LCD** will display and flash **DEL ALL**. Press the **START/STOP** button when **DEL ALL** is flashing.

Two

Check the cuff is the right size

When you put the cuff on, it should wrap snugly around your upper arm, with just enough space to slide one finger underneath. The cuff is approximately 22 to 42cm. If your upper arm is bigger than this, please discuss with your library team as they can order larger cuff sizes for you. If your arm is smaller than this, please contact your GP practice for advice on how to test your blood pressure.



Three

Get prepared

- In order for it to be an accurate reading, it's important that you're resting and not feeling anxious or stressed. Try and rest for five minutes before taking the measurement, and three minutes between measurements.
- Use your left arm unless you have been advised otherwise by a healthcare provider.
- Remove any jewellery and watches and roll up your sleeve to expose the skin, making sure your sleeve is not too tight.
- Sit upright in a chair, with your back against the back of the chair and place your feet flat on the floor.
- Rest your arm on a table or flat surface, palm upwards, relaxing your hand and arm. The cuff should be at the same level as your heart (middle of your chest). It's important that you don't clench your fist when you're taking your blood pressure.
- Place the cuff over your upper arm and tighten the cuff over it, making sure you can fit one finger underneath the cuff. The cuff should be over the upper part of your arm with the tubing leading down slightly to the inside of your arm, as shown in the picture on page seven.

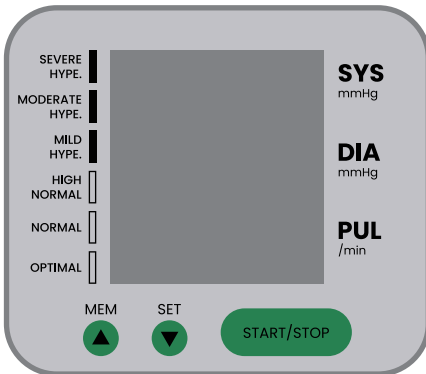
Four

Take the reading

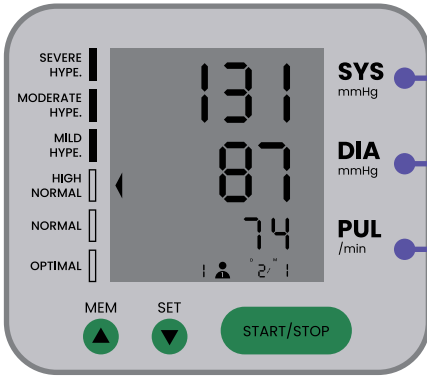
When you check your blood pressure, don't talk and just relax. Press the **ON** button and then press the **START** button.

You'll feel the cuff inflate quite rapidly. It may temporarily be a bit tender or uncomfortable as the cuff inflates and deflates automatically, but this will only be for a short period of time. If it is too uncomfortable you can press the **STOP** button and the cuff will instantly deflate.

A few minutes after you've taken your blood pressure, it's a good idea to check it again, to make sure the readings are similar and accurate. It is a good idea to take it for several days in the morning and evening.



Five



How to read the results

Systolic

The top number

Diastolic

The bottom number

Pulse

The number of heart beats per minute

Six

Recording my results

Please follow your doctor's instructions if you have been asked to take more or different readings from the reporting card. If possible, try to take them at similar times each day.

Please do not use this example to record data, use the reporting card you will have received with your blood pressure monitor

Day	Date	AM/PM	Time	Reading
Day 1	/ /	Morning	:	/
		Evening	:	/
Day 2	/ /	Morning	:	/
		Evening	:	/
Day 3	/ /	Morning	:	/
		Evening	:	/
Day 4	/ /	Morning	:	/
		Evening	:	/
Day 5	/ /	Morning	:	/
		Evening	:	/
Day 6	/ /	Morning	:	/
		Evening	:	/
Day 7	/ /	Morning	:	/
		Evening	:	/

EXAMPLE ONLY

Irregular heartbeat

This device is also capable of detecting **irregular heartbeats**.

PULSE



If this icon appears consistently when you measure your blood pressure, ensure you inform your GP surgery of this. If you are not known to have an irregular heartbeat you will need to be assessed by a member of your GP practice team.

If you are experiencing:

- chest pain
- breathlessness
- dizziness or lightheadedness
- or are otherwise feeling unwell

You should seek urgent medical advice.



**I haven't been
diagnosed
with high
blood pressure**

What do the numbers mean?



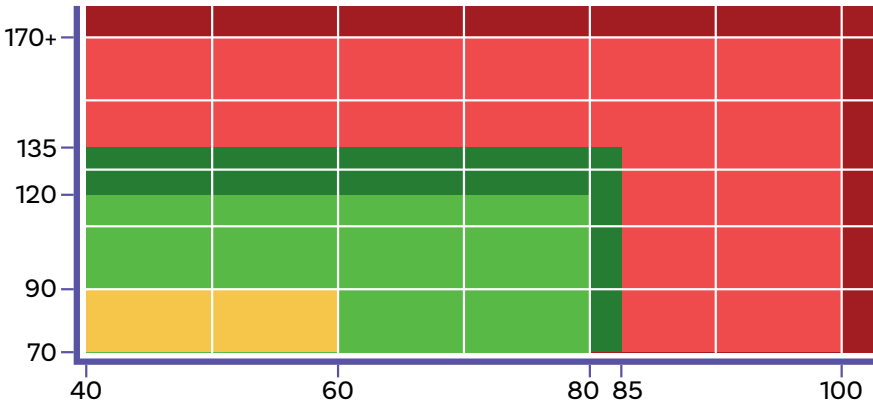
Next, you should check your results by inputting your readings at nhs.uk/health-assessment-tools/check-your-blood-pressure-reading (or use the QR code on this page). You can also use the graph below.



Always follow the advice of a healthcare professional if different to the chart below.

Top number - systolic

Bottom number - diastolic



- Low
- Healthy

- Slightly raised - may be a risk of developing high blood pressure

- High
- Very high

What should I do next?

If you would like some help to understand the readings or are concerned about your blood pressure readings, you can visit your **local pharmacy**, call the **British Heart Foundation Helpline** on **0300 330 3311** or contact your **GP practice**.

My blood pressure is healthy or slightly raised

- Let your GP practice know the result by online form, email or telephone.
- Make some simple lifestyle changes to support your health and wellbeing. These will also help reduce your risk of having high blood pressure in the future. These are on pages 26 and 27 of this booklet.
- Measure your blood pressure again in a year (if in the healthy range), in one month (if it is slightly raised), or as advised by a healthcare professional. If your blood pressure remains in the slightly raised range after one month, you should recheck every few months.

Please note: The category 'slightly raised' is higher than the ideal blood pressure but is not high blood pressure. If your blood pressure is consistently slightly raised, it may suggest you are at risk of developing high blood pressure in the future.

My blood pressure is low

- That's usually not a problem, as it can be naturally low for some people. But sometimes it can be caused by illness, a health condition or some medicines.
- Let your GP practice know the result by online form, email or telephone.
- If you have symptoms such as dizziness or fainting, you should consult a healthcare professional or call 111.

My blood pressure is high

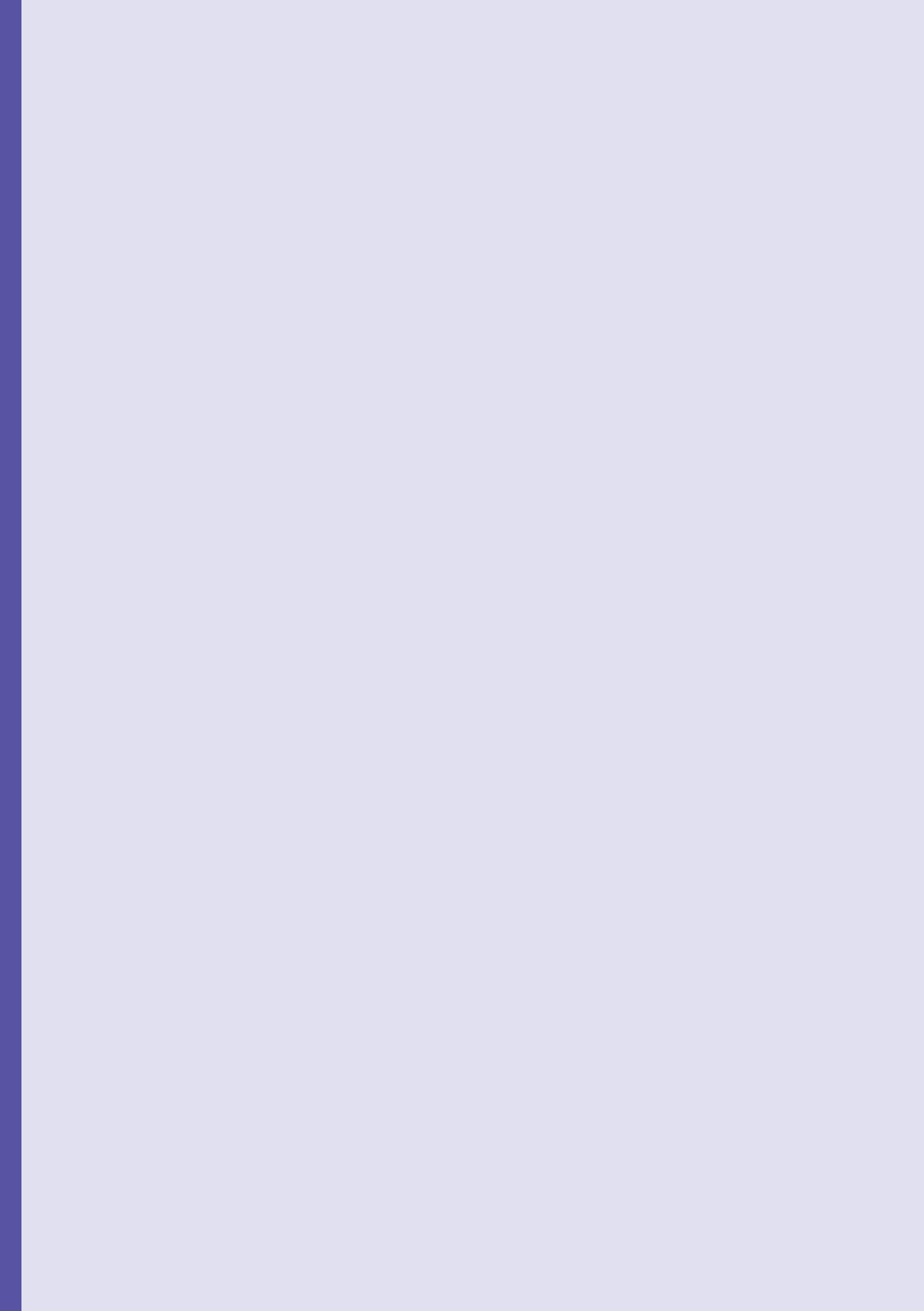
- Don't worry, but do make sure that you take action as you may need further tests and medication to reduce your blood pressure. You should make sure you have taken readings over several days and let your GP practice know your results by online form, email or telephone. Your GP practice will review your readings and contact you to arrange a routine appointment to discuss further. If you have not heard from your practice in two weeks, you should contact them by telephone.
- In addition to contacting your GP practice, have a look at pages 26 and 27 of this flyer to see if there are changes you can make to help to manage your blood pressure.

My blood pressure is **very high**

- Please ensure you have rechecked your blood pressure several times to ensure that the reading is correct. If your blood pressure remains in the very high range, you should contact your GP today as you may need urgent treatment. If you have tested in the evening or at a weekend, please call 111 for advice (do not use 111 online as they cannot help with very high blood pressure readings).

Call 999 or go to A&E if you are experiencing symptoms such as:

- confusion
- blurry vision
- chest pains
- a fast, irregular or pounding heartbeat
- breathlessness
- peeing less than normal
- nausea or vomiting



**I am known
to have
high blood
pressure**

what do the numbers mean?



Always follow the advice of a healthcare professional if different to the chart below.

		Top number - systolic	
		Under 135 (or 145 if 80 years and over)	135+ (or 145+ if 80 years and over)
Bottom number - diastolic	Under 85	Target range (Green)	High (Red)
	85+	High (Red)	High (Red)

 Target range

 High

What should I do next?

If you would like some help to understand the readings or are concerned about your blood pressure readings, you can visit your **local pharmacy**, call the **British Heart Foundation Helpline** on **0300 330 3311** or contact your **GP practice**.

If you have been advised by a healthcare professional that you should be aiming for any particular readings, please follow their advice rather than the chart in this booklet.

My blood pressure is **target range**

- Let your GP practice know the result by online form, email or telephone.
- Make some simple lifestyle changes to support your health and wellbeing. This can help you to manage your blood pressure. These are on pages 26 and 27 of this booklet.
- Measure your blood pressure again in a year (or sooner if asked to by your GP practice).

My blood pressure is **target range**

- Don't worry but do make sure that you take action as you may need to start or change medication to reduce your blood pressure. You should make sure you have taken readings over several days and let your GP practice know your results by online form, email or telephone. Your GP practice will review your readings and contact you to arrange an appointment to discuss further. If you have not heard from your practice in two weeks, you should contact them by telephone.

- In addition to contacting your GP practice, have a look at pages 26 and 27 of this flyer to see if there are changes you can make to help to manage your blood pressure.
- If your top (systolic) reading is above 170, please ensure you have rechecked your blood pressure several times to ensure that the reading is correct. If your blood pressure remains consistently above the 170 range, you should contact your GP today as you may need urgent treatment. If you have tested at a weekend, please call 111 for advice (do not use 111 online as they cannot help with very high blood pressure readings).

Call 999 or go to A&E if you are experiencing symptoms such as:

- confusion
- blurry vision
- chest pains
- a fast, irregular or pounding heartbeat
- breathlessness
- peeing less than normal
- nausea or vomiting

What else can I do to reduce the risk of, or manage high blood pressure?

There are a number of factors which may increase our risk of high blood pressure which we cannot change. These include age, biological sex, ethnicity and family (genetic) risk. However, there are many risk factors connected to our lifestyle which might increase our blood pressure or affect our heart – we can change these.

Stop smoking

Smokers are almost twice as likely to have a heart attack compared to people who have never smoked. Smoking increases the risk of developing heart diseases, including coronary heart disease and a stroke, and can also raise your blood pressure. If you are a smoker, stopping smoking is the most important step you can take to protect your heart's health. For more information or to refer yourself for support, visit smokefreeisland.co.uk, call the Quitline on **01264 563039** or text Quit to **66777**.

Cut down on alcohol

Drinking alcohol can cause a number of diseases including raised blood pressure. You can find resources to support you here: www.inclusioniow.org/alcohol-support



Maintain a healthy weight and eat healthily

Research shows that being overweight can raise blood cholesterol levels and increase blood pressure. Even if you don't have any of these conditions, it is important to maintain a healthy weight to reduce your risk of developing them in the future. Increasing the amount of fruit and veg in your diet is also really important. For further help please visit: iow.gloji.org.uk

Move more

Being more active can help reduce blood pressure, improve our health and help our mental wellbeing. Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week. You can find out more information here: energiseme.org/getting-active

Cut down your salt intake

Eating too much salt can cause high blood pressure, so aim to eat no more than six grammes of salt per day. Most of the salt we consume is in processed food. Choosing low salt alternatives and cooking with pepper, herbs, spices and chilli rather than salt, are also great ways to reduce the amount of salt that you consume.

Community blood pressure testing – useful links

Stop smoking service

smokefreeisland.co.uk

Weight management

www.iow.gov.uk/keep-the-island-safe/public-health/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyles

Exercise and physical activity

www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active

www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits

Mental health and wellbeing

www.iow.gov.uk/keep-the-island-safe/public-health/healthy-living/mental-health-and-wellbeing

www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/five-ways-to-wellbeing

NHS health checks (40 to 74 years)

www.iow.gov.uk/keep-the-island-safe/public-health/healthy-living/nhs-health-checks

NHS Screening programmes

www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-screening

Immunisations and vaccinations

www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them

Substance misuse

www.iow.gov.uk/keep-the-island-safe/public-health/healthy-living/substance-use-treatment

www.hants.gov.uk/rethinkyourdrink



Tell us about your experience

How did you find testing your blood pressure at home? So that we can continue to improve the scheme and make blood pressure testing accessible for all, we would appreciate your feedback.

Scan the QR code to complete our short patient evaluation form, or go to to forms.office.com/e/shu8bK9wDe



If you have difficulty understanding this document, please contact us on 01983 821000 and we will do our best to help you.