

Food

What is a healthy diet?

Aim for a good balance in your diet and plenty of variety. The main part of every meal should be made up of lots of fruit and vegetables, and starchy foods like bread, rice, yam, sweet potato, potato and plantain.

Eat some foods like lean meat, chicken, fish and eggs and pulses such as black-eyed peas and red kidney beans, and eat some milk and dairy foods each day. But try to avoid frying or adding too much fat during cooking.

Try not to eat foods like cakes or biscuits too often and go easy with fats and oils like butter, coconut oil and palm oil. Sunflower, soya, olive or pure vegetable oils are healthier choices, but whichever oil you choose, remember to use it sparingly.

Is it important to cut down on salt?

Definitely - too much salt can push up your blood pressure so try not to add salt to your food. Avoid it in cooking especially if you use salt to pre-season food. Also try and cut down on very salty foods like salt fish and salt meat, or prepare them by soaking overnight and then boiling in two or three changes of water to reduce the salt.

If I need medication, what drugs might I be given?

A wide range of drugs are available to treat high blood pressure. Your doctor will discuss with you what is right for you.

Will there be side effects?

Some drugs might cause symptoms such as dizziness, tiredness, headaches or skin rashes. It's very important to tell the doctor if you experience anything like this, because it might mean the treatment is not right for you.

Don't stop treatment because of side effects without telling your doctor as this might be dangerous. Tell your doctor about any side effects you feel.

If I feel well, why should I take drugs that make me feel bad?

This can be hard to accept. Remember that these drugs are being prescribed to control a condition that could otherwise make you seriously ill in the future. Once the right treatment has been found for you, you should be able to lead a perfectly normal, active life.

Will I have to take these drugs for the rest of my life?

High blood pressure can't be cured, it can only be controlled. So yes, you will probably have to take the drugs for the rest of your life. If you stop, your blood pressure will rise again.

However, if you live a healthy lifestyle, this will help control your high blood pressure and may reduce the amount of drugs you need to take.



Yemeni Community
Association in
Sandwell



High Blood Pressure

Health Development
Officer
YCA
0121 525 3909

Reproduced with the kind
permission of Health
Promotion England

What is high blood pressure?

Your heart pumps blood around your body. As the blood is pushed through the smaller blood vessels in your body, this causes a resistance. The pumping of your heart against this resistance creates the blood pressure needed to keep the blood circulating. When the pressure is persistently high, this is called high blood pressure or hypertension.

How do I know if I've got high blood pressure?

You may not know. You may feel perfectly well. High blood pressure usually causes no symptoms and generally goes undiscovered until a doctor happens to take your blood pressure, often in the course of routine medical examination or during a screening check. Very high blood pressure that is left untreated may cause headaches, dizziness, blurred vision and possibly breathlessness on exertion. If high blood pressure runs in your family, then you are more at risk of developing it yourself.

The only way to be sure whether or not you have high blood pressure is to go and have it checked by your doctor or a nurse. Ring up the practice and ask to make an appointment.

How often should I have it checked?

From the age of 30 you should try and make sure your blood pressure is checked at least every two years. If you have a family history of high blood pressure, or you know your pressure has been high in the past, go more often, about once a year.

Why can't I just live with it?

High blood pressure can cause serious health problems. If you have high blood pressure you are much more likely to suffer a stroke. You are also more at risk of heart attack, kidney damage or kidney failure. High blood pressure may also damage your eyes.

If I have got high blood pressure what will the doctor do?

The doctor will probably ask many simple questions about you and your family. You can expect to be examined, and the doctor may take blood and urine samples for testing. This will be to check if any damage has been caused to the heart or kidneys.

If your condition is mild, the doctor may discuss ways of tackling the problem through changes in your diet or lifestyle. However, if your blood pressure is very high, or remains high in spite of following the doctor's advice, you may need drug treatment.

What can I do to help myself

A healthy lifestyle can help prevent high blood pressure. If your blood pressure is already slightly raised, there's a lot you can do to help lower it through changes in your lifestyle and diet. Also, healthy living may reduce the need for drug treatment. The help and support of your family and friends will be really valuable.

Cut down your smoking if you have blood pressure, smoking increases your risk of stroke and heart problems. It's important to give up. Your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist will give you advice on how to do this.

Watch your weight if you're overweight you are more at risk of high blood pressure. Try and control your weight by becoming more physically active and through healthy eating. Cut down on the amount of fat that you eat and fill up on starchy food. Your doctor or practice nurse may be able to help.

Keep fit Regular physical activity is a good way to keep your weight down, lower your blood pressure and strengthen your heart. Find something you enjoy doing, such as walking, swimming, dancing or gardening. Take the stairs rather than the lift. Get off the bus a couple of stops earlier. Don't use the car for short trips. Keeping fit or finding new interests will also help you to reduce stress.

Some forms of exercise such as body building, weightlifting and press-ups are not good for blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure it is best to avoid these types of exercises. Check with your doctor if you are unsure.