



## beat high blood pressure

**One in three adults in the UK has high blood pressure. When blood pressure is high, the heart has to work harder and the force of the blood flowing through the arteries can cause them damage. If left untreated, high blood pressure can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke, and may damage the kidneys. In many cases, high blood pressure does not cause any symptoms, even when it is dangerously high.**

### **Eat less salt**

Most experts agree that a high salt intake is a major factor in the development of high blood pressure for many people.

- Aim to eat no more than 6g salt per day. In practice, that typically means cutting intake by about half.
- Aim to buy fewer processed foods, and check the salt content before buying: 3/4 of the salt we consume is in processed foods, such as canned soups and ready meals.

### **Eat more fruit and vegetables**

Fruit and vegetables are rich in potassium – a mineral that helps prevent high blood pressure.

- Aim to eat at least five portions of fruit and/or vegetables a day - seven to nine portions is even better.

### **Eat more wholegrain foods**

Wholegrain foods are another good source of potassium. They are also rich in magnesium, which works with potassium and calcium to help reduce blood pressure.

- Aim to eat at least three servings of wholegrain foods a day.

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### Eat low-fat dairy products

Recent studies suggest that eating foods rich in calcium, such as low-fat dairy products, can help reduce blood pressure.

- Aim to eat two servings of low-fat dairy products a day. 1 serving = 200ml skimmed or semi skimmed milk or 1 small carton of yoghurt or 40g (1 1/2 oz) hard cheese

### Stay within the ideal range


People who are overweight, especially those who carry the extra weight around the middle, are four times more likely to suffer from high blood pressure than those within the ideal range.

- One quick and easy way to find out if we need to lose weight is to measure ourselves round the waist.

Waist measurement for	Need to lose weight above
European men	94cm (37")
Asian men	90cm (36")
European & Asian women	80cm (32")

### Take regular exercise

Aim to do at least 30 minutes of moderate activity five times a week. This means activities that make us slightly out of breath, such as brisk walking, swimming, cycling and gardening. People who have not done much exercise for a while need to build up gradually. If 30 minutes is too challenging, break it down to 10 minutes three times a day.



### Label lingo

1g sodium is equivalent to 2.5g salt, so multiply the figure for sodium by 2.5 to convert to the salt equivalent.

As a general rule, foods containing more than 0.5g sodium (1.25g salt) per 100g are high in salt, those with less than 0.1g sodium (0.25g salt) per 100g are low in salt.

### What about caffeine?

There is no evidence to show that drinking coffee in moderation, up to six cups a day, has any adverse effect on blood pressure.

### What about alcohol?

If we stay within the safe guidelines, alcohol will not have any adverse effect on our blood pressure. We need to consume no more than 2-3 units of alcohol a day (women), 3-4 units a day (men), with 1-2 alcohol-free days a week.

### What about supplements?

Taking fish oil supplements in large amounts (3g daily) can produce a small reduction in blood pressure. Always talk to the doctor before taking large doses of any supplement.



For references please see our website.

Wholegrain Goodness  
[www.wholegraingoodness.co.uk](http://www.wholegraingoodness.co.uk)

British Dietetic Association  
[www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com)

British Nutrition Foundation  
[www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)

Blood Pressure Association  
[www.bpassoc.org.uk](http://www.bpassoc.org.uk)

Consensus Action on Salt and Health  
[www.hyp.ac.uk](http://www.hyp.ac.uk)

Topic sheets are free to download from our website.

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