



*Better
Together*

Patient information

Diabetes and Blood Pressure

Diabetes and Endocrinology Departement

High blood pressure, or hypertension, increases the risk of stroke and heart disease and reduces life expectancy if left untreated. For people with diabetes the risks are even greater as high blood pressure also increases the risk of damage to the blood vessels of the eyes and kidneys.

The good news is that treating high blood pressure in people with diabetes can reduce these risks, just as much as controlling blood glucose levels.

What is blood pressure?

Blood delivers vital food and oxygen to all parts of the body. In order to reach all parts of the body and get back to your heart, the blood has to be kept under pressure. Blood pressure changes to meet the needs of your body, so if, for example, you run up the stairs, the pressure increases to deliver more oxygen to your muscles.

Blood pressure values are written as one number over another, e.g. 130/80 (one hundred and thirty over eighty). The first number is called the systolic pressure and is the pressure when your heart beat is at its most powerful, the second number, the diastolic pressure is the pressure between heart beats.

How do you know if you have high blood pressure?

Most people with high blood pressure have no symptoms. Measuring blood pressure is the only way to find out whether it is high or not. In order to get a reliable measure of your blood pressure, it may be measured on several separate occasions.

Occasionally your doctor or nurse may recommend 24 hour blood pressure monitoring using a special device that can measure your blood pressure throughout the day and night.

How can blood pressure be lowered?

Firstly there are steps that you can take yourself.

- Maintain a healthy weight for your height. If you are over weight your blood pressure tends to increase.
- Take regular exercise, such as walking briskly for 30 minutes each day.
- Reduce the amount of fat in your diet, and try and eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day
- Reduce the amount of salt in your diet.

Secondly your blood pressure can be lowered with medication, commonly referred to as anti-hypertensives. Most people with high blood pressure will require medication as well as the self-help approaches above.

There are many different types of blood pressure lowering tablets. Because everyone is different and the medications work in different ways you may have to try a few before finding the right one for you. You may also need up to four different types of blood pressure tablet to reduce your blood pressure adequately.

Tablets are usually taken daily and for the rest of your life. Your doctor or nurse will monitor the effectiveness of your treatment by measuring your blood pressure on a regular basis.

Ideally your blood pressure should be below 130 / 80. It may not be possible to achieve this in every person but you will benefit considerably from any improvement in your blood pressure and from the treatment.

If you have diabetes and you do not know your blood pressure, make sure you arrange to have it measured next time you visit your doctor or nurse. If it is below 130/80, then it should be measured twice every year. If you have high blood pressure and diabetes your blood pressure will be monitored more often, your doctor or nurse will be able to help you lower your blood pressure for a healthier life.

Further information

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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