

Blood Pressure – Are You Checking It?



Why worry about my blood pressure?

High blood pressure hurts your brain, heart, and kidneys. Because there are often no warning signs or symptoms, high blood pressure is called the **Silent Killer**. Many people do not know they have a blood pressure problem.

What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force that pushes blood through your blood vessels. This force is necessary to make blood flow, delivering oxygen and nutrients to the body.

Hypertension is blood pressure that is above the normal range. Over time, high blood pressure damages the blood vessels. Once hypertension develops, it usually lasts for life. Making lifestyle changes is an important part of prevention and management of hypertension. In Nova Scotia, over 30% of adults have hypertension.

Why measure and record my blood pressure?

Knowing your blood pressure numbers and how they compare to your blood pressure target will help you when you talk to your doctor or health care provider. You are the most important member of your health care team.

What should my blood pressure target be?

For most people, it should be less than 140/90 mmHg, and for most people with diabetes or kidney disease, less than 130/80 mmHg. **Your physician or health care provider will advise you on your target blood pressure.** The only way to know your blood pressure is to have it regularly checked. Ask your physician or health care professional for a “My Blood Pressure” card to record your readings.

How can I reduce my risk of high blood pressure?

- Be more active. Get 30-60 minutes of physical activities most days of the week
- Eat more fresh vegetables and fruit. Use low fat milk products. Eat whole grain bread and cereals and lean meats, fish and poultry. If you are overweight, losing as little as 10 or 20 lbs will make a big difference.
- If you smoke, quit.
- Always take medications as directed by your doctor.
- Manage or reduce stress in your life.
- Limit your use of alcohol.
- Use less salt (sodium) on foods, avoid foods high in sodium by reading product labels. The “% Daily Value” tells you how much sodium is in a food item. Compare various versions or brands of the same food and select the lower amount. Try to choose a daily value of 5% or less and avoid items with 15% or more.

More information: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/bloodpressure/>