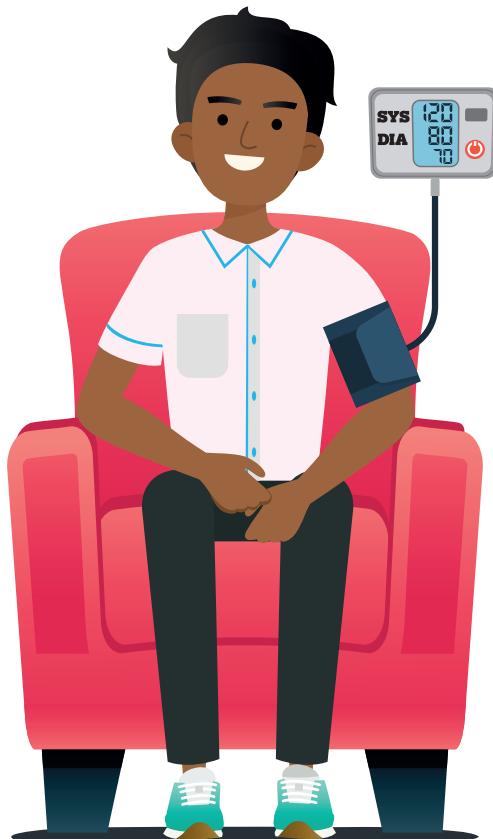




## Why you need to understand your blood pressure and how you can take control

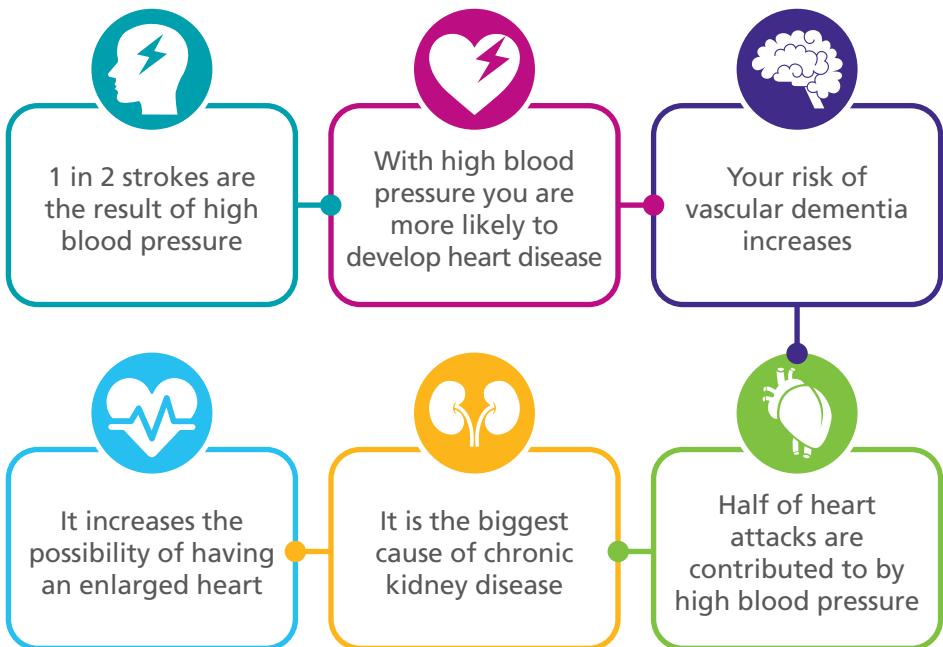


# Do you ever stop to check your blood pressure?

Your blood pressure, or BP, is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries each time your heart beats.

High blood pressure (hypertension) is one of the most common health conditions in this country and could indicate there is an underlying illness. That's why we are encouraging you to 'Know Your Numbers'.

High blood pressure often has no symptoms. In fact, the first sign of it could be as serious as a heart attack or stroke. People with undiagnosed high blood pressure can too often become one of the statistics. Did you know:



Monitoring your blood pressure is easy. Taking just five minutes to measure your blood pressure could save your life. Your blood pressure is measured using a blood pressure monitor. You could visit a local pharmacy or see the practice nurse at your GP Surgery but did you know you can do it yourself? Perhaps you did for the first time today and that's why you have received this leaflet.

# Taking a blood pressure reading

There are some simple things to remember when you are taking a blood pressure reading:

- Avoid things that can raise your blood pressure for half an hour beforehand like eating, having caffeinated drinks, smoking or exercising.
- Wear loose-fitting clothes so that you can fit the cuff easily around your arm.
- Rest for five minutes before you take your reading. Ensure you have your back supported, your arm relaxed and that it is resting on a firm surface at heart level. Your feet should be flat on the floor.

## So now you know your numbers what do they mean?

Blood pressure is monitored using 2 numbers. You will see it written as a ratio e.g 120/80. The top number indicates the pressure in your arteries when your heart contracts to pump your blood (systolic pressure), the bottom number is the pressure in your arteries between heartbeats – when your heart relaxes and refills (diastolic pressure). The chart below shows low, normal and high readings.

	Top number <b>Systolic</b>	Bottom number <b>Diastolic</b>
Low BP	Less than 90	Less than 60
Normal BP	90 - 120	60 - 80
High-Normal BP	120 - 140	80 - 90
High BP	140 and above	90 and above

# So what should you do if your readings are high?

Taking a number of readings throughout the week, around the same time each day, will help you to know your numbers better. If you are concerned about your blood pressure readings you can visit your local pharmacy, contact your GP surgery or call the British Heart Foundation Helpline on **0300 330 3311**.

However, there are some very simple lifestyle changes you can make which can naturally improve your blood pressure.



**Healthy Diet**

It really is as simple as eating more fruit and veg and choosing foods which are lower in salt. Less than 5g of salt daily is your aim. Look out for the traffic light labels on food packaging to help you make an informed decision. Think about reducing your alcohol intake too. It all helps.



**Move more**

This doesn't mean heading off to the gym daily. Walking those short trips instead of taking the car, getting off the bus a stop earlier, gardening and even cleaning the house all count as exercise.



**Stop Smoking**

Easy to say we know but the benefits to both your blood pressure and overall health are huge and there is support out there to help you quit.

Visit [www.frimleyhealthandcare.org.uk/quitsmoking](http://www.frimleyhealthandcare.org.uk/quitsmoking) for more information



**Sleep and de-stress**

Sleep has a positive effect on our blood pressure and our mind. Try to make sure you are getting enough sleep and that you are finding ways to look after yourself if stressed.

If you want to know more or if you want to buy your own home blood pressure monitor visit [www.frimleyhealthandcare.org.uk/bloodpressure](http://www.frimleyhealthandcare.org.uk/bloodpressure)