

# MANAGE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE!

For many people, lifestyle changes are sufficient to control blood pressure. For others, medication is also required. Follow your doctor's instructions and do not stop taking your medications before talking to your doctor or pharmacist.



Monitoring your blood pressure is an important step towards keeping it within the normal range. Blood pressure should be regularly monitored at home and sometimes checked by a health care professional.



For advice on making healthy choices, contact the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate on

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or by email

**HEALTH.PRO@GOV.MT**  
or our **FACEBOOK PAGE**

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate

Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (2015). High Blood Pressure. Retrieved February 25, 2015 from <http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/index.htm>

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MINISTRY FOR HEALTH

# HOW MUCH IS YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE?



# WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries, which carry blood from the heart to other parts of the body. Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day. In adults, normal blood pressure is recorded as "120/80".



## IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE COMMON?

Almost half of the Maltese adult population suffer from high blood pressure. Half of these do not keep their blood pressure under control. High blood pressure contributes to circulatory diseases (mainly heart attack and stroke) which are the leading causes of death in Malta.

## AM I AT RISK?

You can develop high blood pressure if you: eat an unhealthy diet high in saturated fat and salt; are overweight or obese; do not exercise on a regular basis; consume high levels of alcohol; smoke; do not manage stress; have a family history of high blood pressure; are over 45 years of age; or have other diseases, such as diabetes.

## LOW AND HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood pressure which is abnormally low is unlikely to cause any symptoms and is normally nothing to worry about. However, if the blood pressure drops too low, it can restrict the amount of blood flowing to the brain and other vital organs, which can cause unsteadiness, dizziness, light-headedness or fainting.

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, occurs when readings on separate occasions consistently show blood pressure to be more than 140/90 mmHg. High blood pressure is a condition that often shows no symptoms. This is why it is called the silent killer. Rarely it causes headaches or vomiting.

## CAN I PREVENT IT?

While age and family history cannot be changed, high blood pressure can be prevented by adopting a healthy lifestyle and controlling other diseases (if any).



## DIET

Reduce the amount of salt consumed and eat plenty of vegetables and fruit. Salt raises blood pressure. It is recommended that not more than a total of 5g of salt a day is consumed. Eating a low-fat diet that includes lots of fibre and plenty of vegetables and fruit, helps to lower blood pressure.

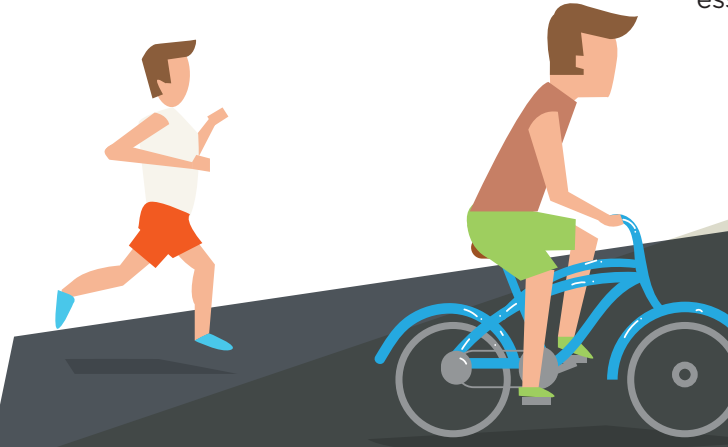


## ALCOHOL

Drinking alcohol regularly will raise blood pressure over time. Alcohol is also high in calories, which will lead to weight gain.

## WEIGHT

Being overweight forces the heart to work harder to pump blood around the body, which can raise blood pressure.



## EXERCISE

Being active and carrying out regular exercise lowers blood pressure by keeping the heart and blood vessels in good condition. Regular exercise will also help maintain a healthy weight and reduce the risk of hypertension.

Adults should carry out at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (such as cycling or fast walking) every week. One should aim at activity that makes you feel warm and slightly out of breath.

## SMOKING

Smoking does not directly cause high blood pressure but it increases the risk of a heart attack or a stroke. Smoking and having high blood pressure will cause the arteries to narrow and significantly increase the risk of heart or lung disease. Quitting smoking is essential.



## STRESS

Stress is an unavoidable fact of life. Finding effective ways to cope with stress is vital for physical and mental health. If you feel overwhelmed, talk to someone such as a trusted friend or a professional.

## CONTROLLING OTHER DISEASES

If you have other diseases, follow the treatment plan devised by your doctor to keep them under control. Learn how to manage your condition yourself, thus identifying any early warning signs and seeking help when required.