

Take control of your
Blood Pressure



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Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

What is high blood pressure?

High blood pressure (also known as **hypertension**) occurs when the force of the blood flowing through your blood vessels is consistently too high. This causes many harmful effects on the body and if left untreated can significantly increase your risk of having a stroke or heart attack.

How do I know if I have high blood pressure?

Usually high blood pressure has no symptoms. The only way you can find out if you have high blood pressure is to have it checked (at least once a year).

What should my blood pressure be?

It is very important to know the recommended target level for blood pressure. It ideally should be **<140/90 mmHg**, however if you have diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease or if you have had a stroke your doctor may prescribe a lower target.

Target Level

Less than 140/90 mmHg*

**European Society of Cardiology Guidelines per the Management of Arterial Hypertension (2018)*



What causes high blood pressure?

In the majority of people there is no single clear cause of high blood pressure. However, there are a number of factors that contribute to high blood pressure.

These include:

- Age (as you grow older, blood pressure tends to rise)
- Being overweight
- A high intake of sodium (salt) in the diet
- Physical inactivity
- A high intake of alcohol
- Family history of high blood pressure
- Ethnic Origin-African, Caribbean and South Asian
- Other medical conditions, including kidney disease and disorders of the adrenal glands

How do I lower my blood pressure?

Everyone can benefit from taking steps to lower their blood pressure and to ensure it stays normal.

If lifestyle measures alone are not effective in keeping your blood pressure under control, it may be necessary to combine these changes with prescribed medications. If you are prescribed medication it is usually for life and you must not stop taking without seeking the advice of your doctor.



Lifestyle recommendations for lowering blood pressure:

- **Maintain a healthy weight** - small reductions can make a big difference to your blood pressure.
- **Stop smoking** - for support, ensure to visit www.quit.ie or talk to your GP, nurse or local pharmacist.
- **Avoid adding salt** to your cooking and at the table. Remember sea, rock, garlic and table salt all have the same sodium content.
- **Drink alcohol in moderation.** For men the maximum should be no more than 17 units over 7 days and for women no more than 11 units over 7 days.
- **Increase your fruit and vegetable intake** up to 7 servings per day.
- **Become more physically active** and aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activity per week.
- Try to manage and learn ways to **cope with stress** in your life.



This leaflet is an extract of Croí's blood pressure booklet. To download the full Croí booklet *Take Control of your Blood Pressure*, please visit the Croí website at www.croi.ie/resources.

For more health information or to support the work at Croí, the Heart & Stroke Charity, please visit our website at www.croi.ie.

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