

Blood Pressure and Hypertension (1 of 2)

What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the measure of the maximum and minimum pressure within the circulation recorded with each heart beat. Two readings are produced; these are termed systolic pressure (the maximum) and diastolic pressure (the minimum). Both are equally important.

Blood pressure is constantly changing in relation to our activity, emotions, anxiety, meals, temperature and pain and that is why repeated readings are necessary before making a judgement on whether blood pressure is too high for a certain individual. Blood pressure also alters with the time of day and is usually lowest at night. Blood pressure is also affected on a more long term basis by our age, body weight, alcohol consumption and diet.

.....and Hypertension?

Hypertension is the medical term for high blood pressure.

Diabetes and Blood Pressure

At least 70% of people with diabetes will be taking blood pressure lowering drugs. It is known that lowering blood pressure in diabetes will reduce the risk of a stroke, heart disease, kidney disease and diabetic eye disease in almost all individuals. The most recent national guidance suggests that people with diabetes who have a blood pressure consistently greater than 140/80 should be considered for blood pressure treatment. This is a general guideline and the decision to commence treatment will also depend on other individual factors that your health care team can discuss with you. For some people with diabetes who already have severe complications the threshold for starting treatment will be lower since these individuals are most at risk of further problems and will have the most to gain from a greater reduction in blood pressure.

What can I do to reduce my Blood Pressure?

The following can all help reduce blood pressure and will complement drug treatments to make them more effective:

- Lose weight, if necessary

If you need this information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0800 374 208 email: palservice@salisbury.nhs.uk

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- Reduce alcohol consumption, if necessary
- Stop smoking, if applicable
- Take regular exercise and increase your physical fitness
- Reduce your salt consumption and caffeine intake.

Blood Pressure Tablets

There are many drug treatments for hypertension and the decision as to which should be used depends on a variety of other medical factors such as the presence of angina, peripheral vascular disease or swollen ankles.

High blood pressure causes very few symptoms and therefore it is important that blood pressure is checked regularly to ensure that it is coming down on treatment.

It is common that the dosage of drugs needs to be increased with time and that other drugs are added into the treatment. At least half of diabetes patients will require at least two different drugs to achieve their target blood pressure. The combination of drugs also works better since they all work in different but complementary ways. This produces a better overall effect than one drug used alone.

Many people with diabetes find themselves taking large numbers of tablets. These will often be a combination of blood pressure tablets, diabetes medicines, aspirin and cholesterol medication. There are, however, substantial health benefits to these treatments.

Fact

Lowering blood pressure in type 2 diabetes people with hypertension reduces the risk of a stroke by 44% and the risk of significant eye complications by 34%.

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