



Blood Pressure

Thousands of Canadians have a health condition related to blood pressure but not everyone understands what blood pressure is and how it can be managed.

High Blood Pressure

Also known as hypertension, high blood pressure is a condition when the heart has to work harder to get blood to flow through the body thereby increasing the risk of heart attack, stroke, and heart disease.

Factors that influence how hard the heart has to work are partly genetic (ex. ethnicity, age, gender, genetic medical conditions) but are largely lifestyle related:

Smoking – avoid second-hand smoke and smokers should look to smoking cessation programs to quit

Alcohol – limit consumption to 2 drinks/week for women & 3/week for men

Exercise – get at least 150 minutes per week of vigorous exercise

Diet – eat a balanced diet keeping an eye on sodium intake

Stress – find a routine that helps keep stress at bay. This will vary by person. Some may find creating a schedule/plan for the week to keep them organized is enough. Others will want to explore athletic pursuits, yoga, meditation, or other hobbies as an outlet for stress.

Measuring Blood Pressure

Your doctor should take your blood pressure whenever you have a doctor's visit. You can

also monitor it yourself either with a home device or at your local pharmacy. To get a good reading, follow these tips:

- Avoid smoking and caffeine 30 minutes prior to taking a reading;
- Do not take a reading when stressed, rushed, or in pain/discomfort;
- If necessary, use the washroom beforehand;
- Avoid talking or watching TV while taking a reading;
- Use the same arm each time;
- Fit the band snugly around your arm at least 3 cm above your elbow & rest the arm on a flat surface

What's the Goal?

There are two measurements in your blood pressure reading:

Systolic – upper number – a measurement of the pressure as your heart pumps blood out

Diastolic – lower number – a measurement of the pressure as your heart rests between beats

Low risk	120 / 80
Medium risk	121-139 / 80-89
High risk	140+ / 90

Remember that your target blood pressure rate can be affected by genetic conditions so talk to your doctor to determine what your ideal blood pressure should be.

Source: heartandstoke.ca