



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
HEART FOUNDATION

QUICK GUIDE



BLOOD PRESSURE



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What is Blood Pressure?

When the heart beats, it pushes blood through a network of tube-shaped blood vessels, called arteries. The blood pushes against the artery walls. The strength of this 'pushing' is your blood pressure.

Your blood pressure naturally goes up and down all the time, adjusting to your heart's needs depending on what you are doing

WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

High Blood Pressure (HBP or hypertension) is when your blood pressure, the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your blood vessels, is consistently too high. This stresses your body's blood vessels, hardening and tightening the walls of the arteries, causing your heart to work harder to pump blood through the smaller space and the pressure inside the vessels grows.

The constant excess pressure on the artery walls weakens them making them more susceptible to atherosclerosis. This can lead to blood clots or bits of fatty material breaking off from the lining of the blood vessel wall.



HYPERTENSION CAN INCREASE YOUR RISK OF:

- ANEURYSM
- HEART ATTACK
- CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE
- HEART FAILURE
- STROKE
- DEMENTIA
- KIDNEY DAMAGE
- EYE DAMAGE

Measuring Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the result of two forces: The first force, **systolic pressure**, occurs as blood pumps out of the heart and into the arteries that are part of the circulatory system. The second force, **diastolic pressure**, is created as the heart rests between heart beats.

These two forces are each represented by numbers in a blood pressure reading and will be written as a figure, such as 120/80 (this is said as '120 over 80').

Systolic Pressure

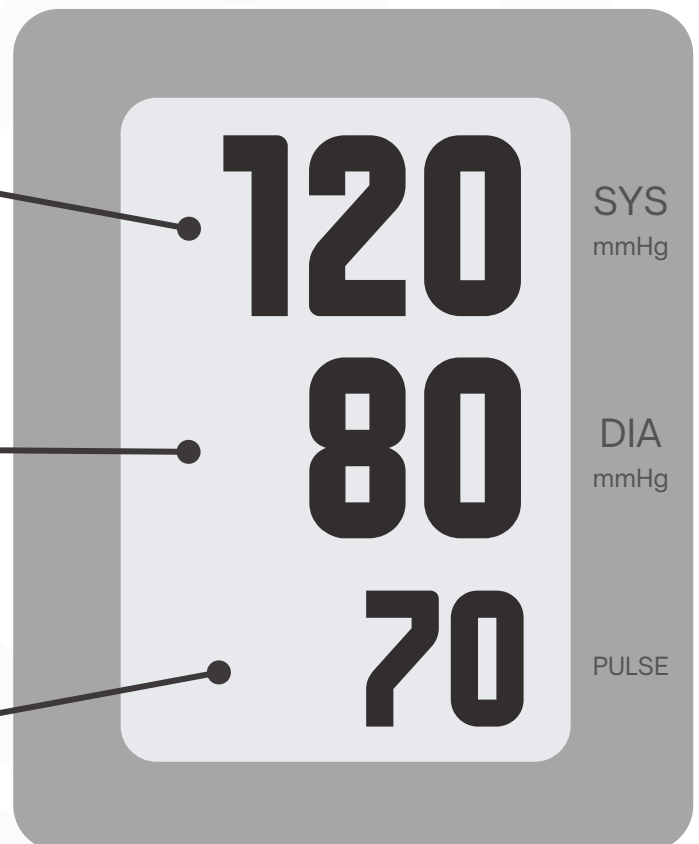
WHEN YOUR HEART SQUEEZES

Diastolic Pressure

WHEN YOUR HEART RELAXES

Pulse (Heart Rate)

THE NUMBER OF TIMES YOUR HEART BEATS PER MINUTE



Blood pressure is measured in millimetres of mercury (which is written as "mm Hg". This recording represents how high the mercury column in the blood pressure cuff is raised by the pressure of the blood.



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BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORIES

KNOW YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE —AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

By AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION NEWS



The newest guidelines for hypertension:

NORMAL BLOOD PRESSURE

*Recommendations: Healthy lifestyle choices and yearly checks.

ELEVATED BLOOD PRESSURE

*Recommendations: Healthy lifestyle changes, reassessed in 3-6 months.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE / STAGE 1

*Recommendations: 10-year heart disease and stroke risk assessment. If less than 10% risk, lifestyle changes, reassessed in 3-6 months. If higher, lifestyle changes and medication with monthly follow-ups until BP controlled.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE / STAGE 2

*Recommendations: Lifestyle changes and 2 different classes of medicine, with monthly follow-ups until BP is controlled.

**Individual recommendations need to come from your doctor.*

Source: American Heart Association's Journal Hypertension

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Managing Your Blood Pressure

One 'high' reading doesn't necessarily mean you have high blood pressure. However, **checking your blood pressure as often as possible** is important to have an accurate measure of your blood pressure.

Hypertension is known as the "Silent Killer" because there are usually no symptoms experienced. You cannot feel high blood pressure, you can have it and not know.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

There isn't a single cause of high blood pressure. However there are a number of factors that make you more likely to have it. There are 2 categories, **non-modifiable factors**, including: Family history, Age, Gender, and **modifiable risk factors**.

MODIFIABLE RISK FACTORS INCLUDE:

- LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- AN UNHEALTHY DIET
- BEING OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE
- DRINKING TOO MUCH ALCOHOL
- SLEEP APNEA
- HIGH CHOLESTEROL
- DIABETES
- SMOKING AND TOBACCO USE
- STRESS



WHAT CAN I DO?

- EAT A WELL-BALANCED DIET AND MONITOR SALT INTAKE
- LIMIT ALCOHOL INTAKE
- COMMIT TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- MANAGE STRESS
- MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT
- QUIT SMOKING, VAPING OR TAKE YOUR MEDICATIONS AS PRESCRIBED
- WORK WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Tracking your blood pressure will help you establish a pattern and will let you know if the lifestyle changes are working to help control your Blood Pressure.



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For More Information

The Trinidad and Tobago Heart Foundation (TTHF) non-profit, non-governmental foundation whose principal objective is advocating for the prevention of Cardiovascular Disease, creating awareness of heart health, healthy lifestyles and proper dietary habits in an effort to reduce the incidence of heart disease and stroke.

For more information, contact:

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