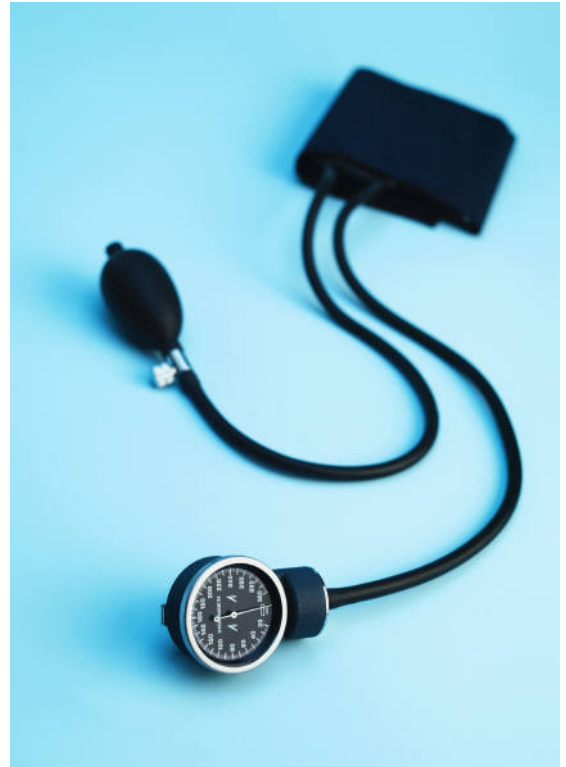


# blood pressure

**Blood** is carried through the body to the heart, tissues and organs via arteries. Blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the walls of these arteries. This blood pressure can be classified as **high** or **low** blood pressure. Blood pressure is measured using two readings. When the heart pumps it causes pressure inside the arteries and moves the blood forward, this is known as Systolic pressure. After this, the heart relaxes as it fills again, and the pressure in your arteries falls. This is known as Diastolic pressure. Acceptable (normal) blood pressure is known as being less than 140mmHg (systolic pressure), over 90mmHg (diastolic pressure) – written as 140/90.



High blood pressure is known as Hypertension and is a major contributor to heart attack and stroke. In this case, either the systolic or diastolic pressure or both are above the normal range. In some cases high blood pressure runs in families, but occasionally kidney or other diseases can be responsible. In some people there is no obvious cause. Other factors that may contribute to high blood pressure include: being overweight, smoking, lack of physical activity, high alcohol intake, eating a diet high in salt (sodium).

## Treatment

Some lifestyle changes an individual can make to improve their blood pressure can be: achieving and maintaining a healthy weight, eating less salt, getting regular physical activity, drinking no more than 2 standard drinks per day, avoiding liquorice as it has a chemical that raises blood pressure and quitting smoking. Other than changes in lifestyle, sometimes medication is prescribed and in these cases it will only help to control it rather than cure it. Usually blood pressure medications are needed to be taken long term.

### Low Blood Pressure

Some individuals suffer low blood pressure or hypotension that can be indicated by a blood pressure reading below an average of about 120/80mmHg. It is often of little significance. Extremely low blood pressure can be associated with dizziness, light-headedness or fainting. This may be caused by reduced cardiac output resulting from a faulty heart valve, abnormal heart rhythms, pulmonary embolism or weakening of the heart muscle following a heart attack (myocardial infarction).

Other factors that may contribute to low blood pressure may be reduced blood volume e.g. dehydration or massive blood loss, excessive dilation of the blood vessels e.g. exposure to heat or certain medications. Symptoms of dizziness and fainting in young individuals without heart disease is usually not cause for concern. In elderly people it is much more serious, as there are many interrelated problems which may make it hard for them to maintain a steady blood pressure.

#### References:

<http://health.ninemas.com.au/article.aspx?id=2965&print=true>