

High Blood Pressure - Hypertension

- High blood pressure, or hypertension, **increases your risk for heart disease, stroke and kidney problems.**
- Hypertension is increasingly common in Kenya - about 1 in 4 adults in Kenya have hypertension.
- Hypertension is sometimes called the “silent killer” because you usually do not know you have it. You cannot feel it. Many people live with untreated hypertension which is dangerous.

What is blood pressure? What do the numbers mean?

- As blood travels through your blood vessels, it puts pressure on the vessel walls. This is blood pressure (BP).
- BP is measured with two numbers.
- Your target BP may be lower if you have kidney disease, or higher if you are elderly. Your doctor will tell you your target BP.

For most people
target BP is
less than $\frac{140}{90}$

What caused my high blood pressure?

- Though we are not sure about the single cause for high BP, there are many risk factors that lead to it.
- You are more likely to have high BP if you are overweight, stressed, do not exercise much or if you drink a lot of alcohol. High BP also runs in families and is more likely as we get older.

Can I do anything about hypertension? YES!! There is lots you can do to reduce your blood pressure:P

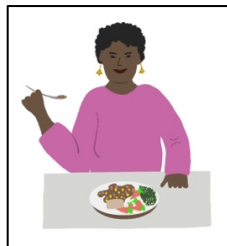
DO

- ✓ Regular physical activity – this is very important in lowering BP.
- ✓ Lose weight if you are overweight. BP falls with every excess kilogram that is lost!
- ✓ Eat a healthy, balanced diet. Eat lots of vegetables, but not so much starch such as ugali, or protein such as meat. The **healthy plate model** shows this.
- ✓ Reduce your salt intake! Check the label for hidden salt in processed foods.
- ✓ Try to sleep for 7-8 hours each night.
- ✓ If you are prescribed medication for your BP then take it every day.
- ✓ If you are experiencing side effects, then please c with your doctor.
- ✓ Make sure you come to follow-up appointments.



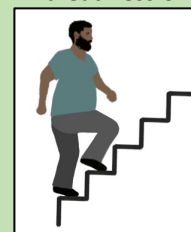
DON'T

- ✗ Eat salty food. Try not to add salt when cooking. Use herbs and spices instead. Put away the salt pot at the table!
- ✗ Eat very fatty food. Trim your meat of fat before cooking!
- ✗ Drink alcohol
- ✗ Smoke – this is very dangerous
- ✗ DO NOT STOP medication, even if you're feeling fine.



EXERCISE FOR LOWERING YOUR BP

- Anything that makes you slightly short of breath or gives you a light sweat is exercise.
- Doing exercise does not have to be complicated or expensive and *any* exercise will be helpful.
- Think about what physical activity you are already doing in your day-to-day life and consider how you can do more. For example, can you walk more often? If you walk already, can you walk a little faster?
- It is good if the exercise is for around 30 minutes, most days of the week.
- You should speak to the doctor if you feel breathless or ill while exercising.



Can I track my blood pressure at home?

- It is very useful to check your BP in a nearby facility or even at home, if you are able to buy your own machine. This will be more accurate than one BP reading in clinic.
- Do this twice daily if you can, morning and evening, for at least 4 days before coming for review appointments

How to take your BP

- Sit quietly in a chair for 5 minutes before taking your reading and make sure you're not feeling stressed. Rest your arm on a table; don't clench your fist.
- Be still and silent whilst the reading is taken.
- Each time you take your BP, take two readings, one minute apart, and record it in a journal.

