

MANAGING YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE



High blood pressure is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. The risk of high blood pressure rises steadily with age. It affects around one in three Australians aged 25 years and older.

What is high blood pressure or hypertension?

Blood pressure is a measure of the force with which blood in the arteries is pumped around the body by the heart. In some people this pressure stays higher than it should. This is known as high blood pressure or hypertension.

Blood pressure is recorded as two numbers, for example 120/80 or 120 over 80. The larger number is called 'systolic blood pressure'. This indicates the pressure in the arteries as the heart contracts and pumps blood out with each beat. The lower number is 'diastolic blood pressure', which indicates the pressure as the heart relaxes and fills with blood.

Normal blood pressure should be less than 130/85. If your blood pressure is consistently more than 140/90 it will likely be diagnosed as being too high.

People cannot feel the effects of high blood pressure, so you can feel perfectly healthy even if your blood pressure is high. This is why it is so important to have your blood pressure checked regularly.

RISK FACTORS FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

- being overweight
- smoking
- excessive alcohol intake
- high salt intake
- unhealthy food choices
- physical inactivity
- family history

Stress is also known to raise blood pressure but it tends to only raise blood pressure for short periods of time.

How can I manage high blood pressure?

Medication can be used to help reduce blood pressure. There are also many lifestyle changes you can make to help manage your blood pressure. These include maintaining a healthy body weight, exercising regularly, limiting alcohol intake, avoiding smoking and making healthy eating choices.

Healthy eating tips for a healthy blood pressure

A healthy diet that includes a variety of different foods from the five food groups can help manage high blood pressure.

Here are some easy tips:

- Follow the Australian Dietary Guidelines eatforhealth.gov.au
- Ensure you get at least the minimum recommended intake of foods from the dairy food group.
- Select wholegrain rather than white/refined varieties of bread, pasta, noodles, breakfast cereals and rice.
- Fill your plate with a variety of types and colours of vegetables. Eat two serves of fruit a day.
- Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, legumes and nuts.
- Eat less discretionary foods such as fried potatoes, cakes and muffins, alcoholic drinks, soft drinks, energy drinks and meat pies.

The role of dairy foods and high blood pressure

Dairy foods have long been known for their role in bone health, but recent research has demonstrated that consumption of milk, yoghurt and cheese can protect us against heart disease and stroke, reduce our risk of high blood pressure and some cancers and may reduce our risk of type 2 diabetes.

AS A RESULT OF THE UPDATED EVIDENCE, FOR MOST AGE GROUPS, THE AUSTRALIAN DIETARY GUIDELINES RECOMMEND HIGHER DAILY INTAKES OF THE DAIRY FOOD GROUP THAN PREVIOUS DIETARY GUIDELINES.

The exact reason that dairy can help to lower blood pressure is still being explored. Research suggests the unique combination of minerals and specific proteins in dairy foods plays a big part. Dairy foods are a natural source of 10 essential nutrients including calcium, potassium, phosphorous, magnesium, carbohydrate, protein, vitamin A, riboflavin, vitamin B12 and zinc.

Minimum recommended number of serves from the dairy food group

	Age (years)	No. of serves per day
Men	19–70	2 ½
	70+	3 ½
Women	19–50	2 ½
	50+	4
	Pregnant or breast feeding	2 ½

*Adapted from: 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. The dairy food group includes milk, cheese, yoghurt and/or alternatives.**



*Alternatives include: 250ml soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml.

Unfortunately, most Australians are missing out on the health benefits that come with consuming milk, yoghurt and cheese as they don't include enough in their diet. It is estimated that 8 out of 10 Australian adults need to increase their intake of the dairy food group in order to achieve the levels recommended by the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

With a wide variety of dairy foods available, enjoying your recommended amount every day is easy.

- Grab a café latte on the way to work.
- Have a bowl of fruit and yoghurt for breakfast or after a workout.
- Include cheese in a salad or sandwich.
- Dollop natural yoghurt on a jacket potato.
- Have a warm, milky drink in the evening.

For recipes and ideas on how to include adequate serves of dairy foods in your healthy eating plan visit dairy.com.au/health.

What about foods containing salt?

Reducing your intake of salt can help lower high blood pressure.

TIPS TO LOWER YOUR SALT INTAKE



- Processed foods are often the main source of salt in the diet. Limit foods such as hot chips, crisps, salted nuts, pies, sausage rolls, processed meats (bacon, ham, salami, sausages and chorizo), pizzas and ready-made meals.
- Buy fresh foods or foods processed without salt, 'low in salt' or with 'no added salt'.
- Avoid adding salt in cooking or at the table. Instead, try using herbs to add flavour to foods.
- Use the nutrition information panel on food packaging to help identify foods lower in salt. Foods with a sodium content of 120mg/100g or less are considered low in salt.

In general, you can adapt to the taste of lower salt foods within a few weeks and often develop a preference for these foods after several months.

Salt is a vital part of the cheese making process, as it controls moisture, texture, taste, functionality and also acts as a natural preservative. Even though cheese contains salt, several studies have shown cheese can be enjoyed as part of a balanced diet without worrying about increasing blood pressure.