

High Blood Pressure - Myths

Myth: The bottom number is more important than the top in a blood pressure reading

Fact: Your blood pressure is recorded as two numbers – the systolic pressure over the diastolic pressure. In the past, generally more attention was paid to the diastolic reading. However, both numbers are important and controlling both is key in avoiding the health risks associated with high blood pressure.

Myth: Systolic pressure of 100 + your age is normal.

Fact: This is not true and comes from a time when there was less knowledge on the risks of high blood pressure. At any age, your ideal blood pressure is under 120/80mmHg, high blood pressure is 140/90 mmHg or higher.

Myth: I'm fit and healthy so I won't have high blood pressure.

Fact: High blood pressure often has no signs or symptoms. Many people have high blood pressure for years without knowing it and it is often called the "the silent killer" because it has no symptoms. You may not feel ill but it is still important to get it checked

Myth: People don't die from high blood pressure

Fact: Left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to severe health problems and life expectancy may well be reduced due to the risk of cardiovascular disease such as heart failure or stroke.

Myth: Only old people get high blood pressure

Fact: Your chances of having high blood pressure increase with age however, anyone can suffer from high blood pressure and is more common in people that are overweight, don't do enough exercise, don't have a balanced diet, eat a lot of salt, have a relative with high blood pressure or are of African or Caribbean descent. Caffeine and alcohol can also increase blood pressure.

Myth: I don't add salt to my food so do not need to worry about my salt intake

Fact: It is estimated that three quarters of the salt we consume comes from the food we buy. It is therefore very easy to exceed the recommended daily allowance of 6 grams a day without knowing about it.