



Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November

## **BIG BLOOD PRESSURE CHECK 2019 RESULTS: ONE IN SIX WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE READING**

The Stroke Foundation's Big Blood Pressure Check had a positive impact throughout October, having tested over 13,500 New Zealanders for high blood pressure. However, figures show that over the last three years, those that were referred to a GP for a high blood pressure reading has significantly increased. This year, over 16% (one in six) of those tested had a high blood pressure reading (compared to 11% in 2016). This can be partly attributed to the Stroke Foundation's strategy to target more at risk communities.

Free blood pressure check testing sites were set up at 102 PAK'nSAVE and New World supermarkets on Saturday 5 October and the Big Blood Pressure Check Van visited communities across the North Island. In addition, the Stroke Foundation partnered with 129 Unichem and Life Pharmacies to offer free checks instore throughout October, resulting in a further 1,597 people getting tested.

Of the 12,000 tested by the Stroke Foundation volunteers, one in six had to be referred to a GP due to a high blood pressure reading. High blood pressure is one of the leading causes of stroke, so this information could have been life-saving.

The Stroke Foundation's Health Promotion Manager, Julia Rout explained, "high blood pressure doesn't have any symptoms, so having an annual check is incredibly important, much like a car warrant of fitness. A person with high blood pressure is up to seven times more likely to have a stroke than someone with normal or low blood pressure, which is why the work that we do is so important in reducing the devastation stroke can cause, especially for those communities most at risk. Our focus for the coming year will be around building our engagement with these communities, so we can better equip them with the tools to reduce their risk of stroke."

High blood pressure is the number one modifiable risk factor for stroke. High blood pressure can be managed and controlled which is why getting a regular check is important to reduce stroke and other health risks.

The Big Blood Pressure Check was launched 11 years ago to encourage people to get their blood pressure checked regularly and to understand the association between high blood pressure and stroke. For the first time this year, the campaign was extended to last the whole month of October, supporting more people to get their free check.

The Stroke Foundation encourages everyone over the age of 45 to have an annual blood pressure check. Getting a check is a quick and simple step to help avoid a stroke.

- ENDS -

**Notes to editors:**

The Stroke Foundation wants to acknowledge the support and help we received from our partners and volunteers including but not limited to Foodstuffs (PAK'nSAVE, New World), St John, Wellington Free Ambulance, Rotary, Ryman Healthcare, Green Cross Health (Unichem and Life Pharmacy), selected Tertiary Institutes and Primary Health Organisations.

**Key results:**

- 13,597 New Zealanders had their blood pressure checked throughout October
- 16% had high blood pressure readings
- 231 sites participated on the campaign day and throughout October (compared to 124 in 2018)
- 18% had their blood pressure checked over a year ago and 17% couldn't recall the last time they had their blood pressure checked
- Demographics:
  - Gender:
    - Male: 45%
    - Female: 55%
  - Ages:
    - <20: 4%
    - 20-35: 12%
    - 36-49: 21%
    - 50-62: 37%
    - 65+: 26%
  - Ethnicity:
    - European: 65%
    - Maori: 11%
    - Pacific: 5%
    - Asian: 9%
    - Indian: 6%
    - Other: 4%

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The Stroke Foundation of New Zealand

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**About the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand**

The Stroke Foundation is the only national charity in New Zealand focused on the prevention of and recovery from stroke. For almost 40 years we have actively promoted ways to avoid stroke and dedicated ourselves to working closely with stroke survivors across the country. The generosity of New Zealanders enables us to help thousands of stroke survivors every year; providing them with critical services to ensure the best possible outcomes - not just for themselves, but also their family/whānau

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and carers too. Three quarters of strokes are preventable and our vital awareness campaigns and health promotion programmes save thousands of lives every year. To find out more about the important work the Stroke Foundation does visit: [www.stroke.org.nz](http://www.stroke.org.nz).