

He taonga | A treasure



He kōrero whakataki mō te pēhanga toto

Introduction to blood pressure

What is blood pressure?

High blood pressure (BP) is a leading cause of stroke. Healthy blood pressure not only protects your brain, it also helps protect your heart, eyes, and kidneys. The great news is that high BP can be lowered by making simple lifestyle changes and if necessary, taking medication. Here we explain what BP is, how to understand BP readings, and what you can do to lower high BP.

He aha te pēhanga toto?

What is BP?

BP is the pressure on the walls of your blood vessels caused by blood being pumped around your body. Your blood pressure naturally goes up and down throughout the day. Normal blood pressure is around 120/80 or lower (said as 'one twenty over eighty'). The first number is your systolic blood pressure, which is the pressure on the walls of your arteries when your heart is beating. The second number is the diastolic blood pressure, which is the pressure on the walls of your arteries when your heart is resting between beats.

He aha te mate pēhanga toto?

What is high BP?

High BP (hypertension) is when your BP consistently measures 130/80 or higher. High BP is usually diagnosed by a doctor who will take at least three readings over a period of a few months. High BP often has no signs or symptoms so the only way to know if you have it, is to get a regular check.

If your doctor diagnoses you with high BP, they may start you on medication to lower it. It is important that you take this medication as prescribed and don't stop taking it unless advised by your doctor.



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Me pēhea te mate pēhanga toto ki te mate Īkura roro?

How does high BP cause stroke?

High BP puts strain on the blood vessels throughout your body, including the ones in your brain, causing them to harden and narrow. This means that the blood vessels in the brain are more likely to burst or become blocked and cause a stroke.

He aha te ara tika kia toto rere pai, he tohu ora?

How can you maintain a healthy BP?

The good news is that there is a lot you can do to keep your BP healthy. Here are some tips:

What causes high BP?

- Getting older
- A family history of high blood pressure
- Having diabetes
- Eating too much salt and processed foods
- Not being physically active
- Being overweight
- Drinking too much alcohol, too often
- Smoking or vaping of nicotine
- Living with long-term stress
- Drinking too much caffeine (e.g., coffee and energy drinks)
- Not getting enough sleep

- Get your BP check at least once a year or as advised by your doctor
- Eat mostly 'whole foods' which are low in salt, sugar and saturated fat
Fruit, vegetables, oats, pasta, rice, legumes (e.g. chickpeas, lentils and red kidney beans), eggs, fish, chicken, lean meat, unsalted nuts, milk and yoghurt.
- Eat less salt and processed kai
Use herbs, spices, and lemon juice as alternatives to salt. Reduce takeaways and processed foods (e.g. bacon, sausages, corned beef, instant noodles).
- Move more
Walking, gardening, dancing, swimming, cycling, collect kaimoana (seafood), kapa haka, doing housework, and using the stairs are some examples.
- Be smokefree
- Keep alcohol intake low
At least two alcohol free days a week. Avoid binge drinking.
- Get plenty of sleep and manage stress
Make sure you are getting between 7-9 hours of sleep daily and are managing stress levels with regular exercise, and by finding time to do the things you enjoy, such as reading, or listening to music.
- Reduce caffeine
Aim for no more than the equivalent of four cups of coffee per day. Avoid energy drinks.

Hei aha ngā rongoā?

What about medication?

Your doctor may suggest that you take medication to lower your BP. If your doctor prescribes this medication, it is important that you take it as directed and continue to take your medication unless advised by your doctor.

