

## Simple Lifestyle Advice

You may have a diagnosis of high blood pressure or simply want to find ways of reducing your chances of getting raised blood pressure in the future. It is important to realise that this does not have to be only treated with tablets. There are lots of lifestyle options that you can take which can perhaps alone lower your blood pressure, or indeed lower the dose of medication you require. For example, it has been shown for every 4.5kg you can lose in weight, and keep it off 6 months later, each blood pressure value can reduce by 8mmHg.

We recommend you try the following:

- Eat healthily. Your diet should be LOW in fat, red meat, and sugar. It should be HIGH in fruit and vegetables, whole grains, fish, poultry, and low fat dairy products.
- Lower your salt intake. Sodium is a big culprit for causing high blood pressure. You should not add salt to your cooking or plated food. However, 80% of salt is hidden in processed foods! Look for <0.6g sodium/100g on the labels, but even better, eat as much freshly prepared food as possible!
- Limit your portion size. Over the last few decades, we are all putting more onto our plates, leading to the weight problem we have in the developed world. Try calculating your portion size on the equivalent to one handful, particularly for carbohydrates (potatoes, rice, pasta). Eating more vegetables and fruit, particularly as a healthy snack is good.
- Exercise regularly. The benefits of exercise, not only for the body but the mind are vast. We should all be doing at least 30mins of exercise, for 5 days per week. This should get you mildly out of breath and sweaty. It doesn't mean joining expensive gyms- a brisk walk or tackling the garden or housework is great. Although a physical job will help, we do recommend you also fit in leisurely exercise to your week also.
- Try to lose weight. We have already mentioned many ways to help you lose weight, but it can often be a hard and frustrating process. You don't need to get to a perfect weight. If you are overweight, you can gain great health benefits from losing 5-10% of your body weight. This is often about 5-10kg (10kg is about one and half stone).
- Don't smoke. Stopping smoking is often the single most effective thing you can do to reduce your risk of future illness. This risk starts to reduce as soon as you give up but may take a few years before the increased risk reduces completely. The sooner you give up, the better. We know it can be difficult, and are more than happy to help.
- Drink sensibly. Men should drink no more than 21units per week, and women, 14units. It is important this is spread across the week, and not "binged" at the weekend! We also recommend at least 2 alcohol free days per week. Excess alcohol can add to weight problems as well as mental, social and physical health issues. If you are finding it difficult to restrict your alcohol intake, we are more than happy to offer advice and help.

This shows that there are many simple things that you can do as part of your daily routine that will help you and your future health.