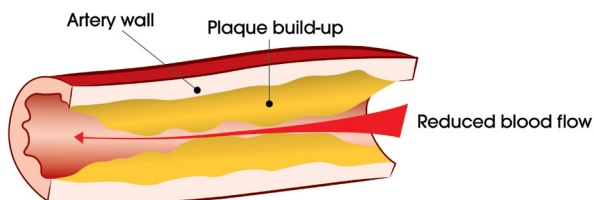


How does high blood pressure affect my health?

If you don't reduce your high blood pressure, your heart and arteries can become overloaded. High blood pressure can speed up the build-up of plaque on the artery walls (atherosclerosis), clogging blood flow to your heart muscle. Atherosclerosis can cause health problems, such as angina, heart attack and stroke.



Artery showing plaque build-up that clogs blood flow

High blood pressure can weaken the walls of arteries in your brain, leading them to burst and causing a stroke.

High blood pressure can also affect arteries to other parts of the body, such as the eyes, kidneys and legs.

The higher your blood pressure, the harder your heart must work to pump blood around the body. If you don't treat your high blood pressure, your heart may weaken because of the extra demand, and it won't be able to do its job. This may cause heart failure, a serious health condition with symptoms such as tiredness, shortness of breath, and swollen feet and ankles.

Quick tip

If you have high blood pressure, your GP can give you a personalised plan to help you to reduce it.

How can I reduce my high blood pressure?

Many people need medicine to manage high blood pressure, but other people can manage it by making some healthy lifestyle changes.

You can help to lower your blood pressure by:

- maintaining a healthy body weight – You can find out if you have a healthy body weight by using the body mass index (BMI) calculator on the Heart Foundation website at www.heartfoundation.org.au/bmi-calculator. You can also check your waist size (circumference), and aim for a target of <94 cm for men, <90 cm for Asian men and <80 cm for women
- being physically active – You should aim for 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, on all or most days of the week
- limit the amount of alcohol you drink, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day and no more than four on any one occasion
- decreasing your salt (sodium) intake – Salt is hidden in processed foods such as bread, processed meat, some cereal products, biscuits and pasta.

Even if you take medicine to manage your condition, it is still important to make changes to your lifestyle to help reduce your blood pressure.

Being a non-smoker reduces your risk of developing problems with your heart and blood vessels.

You can call the Quitline on 13 78 48 or go to www.quitnow.gov.au/ for help.