

What are your numbers? Go to the column based on the highest value e.g. 128/92 = amber. This is advice is to interpret a one off reading.

Up to 139/89

This is a normal reading.

It would be helpful if you can pass your blood pressure reading and other data to your GP so they can update your records.

Consider having a full NHS Health Check if aged 40 – 74 and you don't have any chronic health conditions This will enable you to check other aspects of your health for free. [Somerset NHS Health Check \(somersethealthchecks.co.uk\)](https://somersethealthchecks.co.uk)

If you've been told you have high blood pressure before, then plan to recheck your blood pressure in 6 months, otherwise check it again in a year.

From 140/90 to 179/119

As a one off reading this is a little high. We recommend you collect some more readings over the course of a week and then contact your GP.

If you have your own blood pressure machine which is less than five years old you can use this.

Your local pharmacy may also be able to lend you a machine.

You should try some lifestyle changes to reduce your blood pressure.

At 180/120 or higher

This is a high reading and could indicate an immediate problem.

If you have symptoms like a headache, chest pains or vision changes then we would advise you to go to A&E now for further advice.

If you can't get to A&E or if you don't have symptoms then it is still important to try to make contact with your GP today so they can advise you further.

You may need further medical checks and medication but lifestyle changes will help.

A few simple lifestyle changes can make all the difference whatever your blood pressure levels

Eat more fruit and vegetables

These are the best source of potassium in the diet which helps lower blood pressure. Try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Don't forget that frozen, canned and dried varieties count too.

Be active

Aim for half an hour of exercise on five days of the week. The exercise needs to make you breath faster and warm you up.

Eat less salt

An adult should eat less than 6g of salt a day. Over 75% of the salt we eat is already "hidden" in foods. Make sure you check food labels for salt content and don't add extra to your food.

Drink alcohol in moderation

Don't drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week on a regular basis and spread this over three or more days.

Lose weight if you need to

If you lose the excess weight, you will probably find your blood pressure reduces.

Stop smoking

To reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke.

Cut back on caffeine

Drinking more than 4 cups of coffee a day may increase your blood pressure. Try switching to caffeine free options.

Mention that this leaflet applies to adults

Your blood pressure reading

Blood pressure is measured in millimetres of mercury (mmHg). It is written like this: 140/90mmHg which is said "140 over 90". The first and highest number shows pressure when your heart beats and pushes the blood around your body. The second lower number shows the pressure when your heart relaxes and refills with blood.

How do you know if you have high blood pressure?

A healthy blood pressure is no more than 120/80 for either number. High blood pressure is diagnosed with average readings over 135/85 whatever your age. High blood pressure often has no symptoms. If your blood pressure is consistently over this level you should take action to lower it to protect your health. High blood pressure is also known medically as hypertension.

Why is high blood pressure dangerous?

High blood pressure puts more strain on your heart and blood vessels. It can increase your risk of heart attacks and stroke.

What are the risk factors?

About 1 in 3 adults in Somerset has high blood pressure so it is fairly common.

Blood pressure tends to creep up as we get older. Males tend to have higher blood pressure than females. Some ethnic groups have an increased risk of high blood pressure.

The good news is that a number of lifestyle factors can also increase blood pressure and small changes in these can help bring your blood pressure down.

Medication

Some people will need to take medication prescribed by their doctor to lower their blood pressure. Today's blood pressure tablets are very effective and can reduce your risk of stroke and heart attack.

For more information or advice

Visit our Healthy Somerset website for support on lifestyle change information on local services and useful apps



www.HealthySomerset.co.uk/heart

**Understanding your
blood pressure
readings and
what to do
next**

What to do next?

The first thing to say is "Don't Panic"! A single reading may not be representative of your average blood pressure levels in a range of situations.

Also, if you are worried about your health please get advice from a health professional.

Read on for advice on how to interpret your levels and what to do next.