



High blood pressure is a serious medical condition that significantly increases the risks of heart and kidney disease. As many sufferers have no symptoms, it is known as the “silent killer”.

What is high blood pressure?

A blood pressure reading above 130/80 mmHg is considered high. High blood pressure is a condition that often shows no symptoms.

Blood pressure measurements indicate how strongly blood presses against arterial walls as it is pumped around the body by the heart.

Blood pressure is measured in millimetres of mercury (mmHg) and is recorded in two readings, systolic over diastolic.

Systolic refers to the pressure of blood when the heart beats to pump it out.

Diastolic refers to the pressure of blood when the heart rests in between beats.

What is hypertension?

Hypertension is diagnosed if readings on separate occasions consistently show blood pressure to be 140/90 mmHg or higher. The WHO Health 2020 policy identifies hypertension as the world’s most prevalent preventable disease.

What are the risks of high blood pressure?

High blood pressure puts the arteries and heart under strain raising the probability of heart attack, stroke and kidney disease.

What is the burden of high blood pressure and hypertension?

In 2009, WHO attributed 13% of all deaths globally to high blood pressure, making it an area of prime importance for public health worldwide.

Hypertension causes 22% of heart attacks in western Europe and 25% in central and eastern Europe.

Cardiovascular disease, for which high blood pressure is a contributing factor, causes 42% of all deaths across the WHO European Region annually.

The WHO response

The WHO Regional Office for Europe is working in collaboration with its 53 Member States and international partners to reduce the incidence of high blood pressure in the European Region. The Health 2020 policy has identified high blood pressure as a major contributor to disease.

World Health Day 2013 represents an opportunity to raise awareness of the issue among policy-makers and the public. Salt reduction in particular is a cost-effective way of reducing blood pressure.

Further information

For more on World Health Day 2013, see the WHO Regional Office for Europe web site www.euro.who.int/worldhealthday

Key facts - High blood pressure

- affects one in three adults worldwide
- affects men more than women
- is implicated in 13% of deaths worldwide.

How can high blood pressure be treated?

As many people with high blood pressure have no symptoms, blood pressure should be checked regularly by a health care professional or even monitored at home.

Lifestyle changes can be extremely effective in reducing high blood pressure and can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ Eating a healthy diet
- ✓ Reducing salt intake (to less than 5g daily)
- ✓ Exercising regularly
- ✓ Stopping smoking
- ✓ Reducing alcohol consumption.

Medication and high blood pressure

In some cases medication must be used, in conjunction with lifestyle changes, to control blood pressure.

CONTROL YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

CUT YOUR RISK OF HEART ATTACK AND STROKE

World Health Day 2013



Risk factors for high blood pressure

- A diet high in saturated fat
- Excessive salt consumption
- Overweight and obesity
- A sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise
- Alcohol consumption
- A family history of high blood pressure
- Being over 65 years of age
- Co-morbidities such as diabetes