



## World Hypertension Day

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## 17 May – World Hypertension Day

### Key facts

- An estimated 1.28 billion adults aged 30–79 years worldwide have hypertension, most (two-thirds) living in low- and middle-income countries.
- An estimated 46% of adults with hypertension are unaware that they have the condition.
- Less than half of adults (42%) with hypertension are diagnosed and treated.
- Approximately 1 in 5 adults (21%) with hypertension have it under control.
- Hypertension is a major cause of premature death worldwide.
- One of the global targets for noncommunicable diseases is to reduce the prevalence of hypertension by 33% between 2010 and 2030.

### Overview

Hypertension (high blood pressure) is when the pressure in your blood vessels is too high (140/90 mmHg or higher). It is common but can be serious if not treated.

People with high blood pressure may not feel symptoms. The only way to know is to get your blood pressure checked.

#### Things that increase the risk of having high blood pressure include:

- Older age
- Genetics
- Being overweight or obese
- Not being physically active
- High salt diet
- Drinking too much alcohol

Lifestyle changes like eating a healthier diet, quitting tobacco and being more active can help lower blood pressure. Some people may still need to take medicines.

# 17 May – World Hypertension Day continued...

Blood pressure is written as two numbers. The first (systolic) number represents the pressure in blood vessels when the heart contracts or beats. The second (diastolic) number represents the pressure in the vessels when the heart rests between beats.

Hypertension is diagnosed if, when it is measured on two different days, the systolic blood pressure readings on both days is  $\geq 140$  mmHg and/or the diastolic blood pressure readings on both days is  $\geq 90$  mmHg.

## Risk factors

Modifiable risk factors include unhealthy diets (excessive salt consumption, a diet high in saturated fat and trans fats, low intake of fruits and vegetables), physical inactivity, consumption of tobacco and alcohol, and being overweight or obese.

Non-modifiable risk factors include a family history of hypertension, age over 65 years and co-existing diseases such as diabetes or kidney disease.

## Symptoms

Most people with hypertension don't feel any symptoms. Very high blood pressures can cause headaches, blurred vision, chest pain and other symptoms.

Checking your blood pressure is the best way to know if you have high blood pressure. If hypertension isn't treated, it can cause other health conditions like kidney disease, heart disease and stroke.

People with very high blood pressure (usually 180/120 or higher) can experience symptoms including:

- Severe headaches
- Chest pain
- Dizziness
- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Blurred vision or other vision changes
- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Buzzing in the ears
- Nosebleeds
- Abnormal heart rhythm

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms and a high blood pressure, seek care immediately.

The only way to detect hypertension is to have a health professional measure blood pressure. Having blood pressure measured is quick and painless. Although individuals can measure their own blood pressure using automated devices, an evaluation by a health professional is important for assessment of risk and associated conditions.

## Treatment

Lifestyle changes can help lower high blood pressure. These include:

- Eating a healthy, low-salt diet.
- Losing weight.
- Being physically active.
- Quitting tobacco.

If you have high blood pressure, your doctor may recommend one or more medicines. Your recommended blood pressure goal may depend on what other health conditions you have.

Blood pressure goal is less than 130/80 if you have:

- Cardiovascular disease (heart disease or stroke)
- Diabetes (high blood sugar)
- Chronic kidney disease
- High risk for cardiovascular disease

For most people, the goal is to have a blood pressure less than 140/90.

## There are several common blood pressure medicines:

- ACE inhibitors relax blood vessels and prevent kidney damage. Examples: enalapril, lisinopril.
- Angiotensin-2 receptor blockers (ARBs) relax blood vessels and prevent kidney damage. Examples: losartan and telmisartan.
- Calcium channel blockers relax blood vessels. Examples: amlodipine, felodipine.
- Diuretics eliminate extra water from the body, lowering blood pressure. Examples: hydrochlorothiazide, chlorthalidone.

## Prevention

Lifestyle changes can help lower high blood pressure and can help anyone with hypertension. Many who make these changes will still need to take medicine.

These lifestyle changes can help prevent and lower high blood pressure.

## Do:

- Eat more vegetables and fruits.
- Sit less.
- Be more physically active, which can include walking, running, swimming, dancing or activities that build strength, like lifting weights.
  - o Get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity.
  - o Do strength building exercises 2 or more days each week.
- Lose weight if you're overweight or obese.
- Take medicines as prescribed by your health care professional.
- Keep appointments with your health care professional.

## Don't:

- Eat too much salty food (try to stay under 2 grams per day)
- Eat foods high in saturated or trans fats
- Smoke or use tobacco
- Drink too much alcohol (1 drink daily max for women, 2 for men)
- Miss or share medication.

Reducing hypertension prevents heart attack, stroke and kidney damage, as well as other health problems.

# 17 May – World Hypertension Day continued...

## Reduce the risks of hypertension by:

- Reducing and managing stress.
- Regularly checking blood pressure.
- Treating high blood pressure.
- Managing other medical conditions.

## Complications of uncontrolled hypertension

Among other complications, hypertension can cause serious damage to the heart. Excessive pressure can harden arteries, decreasing the flow of blood and oxygen to the heart. This elevated pressure and reduced blood flow can cause:

- Chest pain, also called angina.

- Heart attack, which occurs when the blood supply to the heart is blocked and heart muscle cells die from lack of oxygen. The longer the blood flow is blocked, the greater the damage to the heart.
- Heart failure, which occurs when the heart cannot pump enough blood and oxygen to other vital body organs.
- Irregular heart beat which can lead to a sudden death.

Hypertension can also burst or block arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the brain, causing a stroke.

In addition, hypertension can cause kidney damage, leading to kidney failure.

**Source: Hypertension (who.int) Accessed on 29 March 2023**



# 29 May – 5 June - Child Protection Week

National Child Protection Week is commemorated in the country annually to raise awareness of the rights of children as articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005).

The campaign is led by the Department of Social Development in partnership with key government departments and civil society organisations rendering child protection services.

Government calls on all South Africans to support Child Protection Week by ensuring that the most vulnerable in our society do not suffer abuse. It is in our hands to stop the cycle of neglect, abuse, violence and exploitation of children.

Children in South Africa live in a society with a Constitution that has regard for their rights and for the equality and dignity of everyone. Protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse is not only a basic value but also an obligation clearly set out in Article 28 of the South African Constitution.

## Get help

The Department of Social Development has a 24-hour call centre dedicated to provide support and counselling to victims of gender-based violence:

- The toll-free number to call is 0800 428 428 (0800 GBV GBV) to speak to a social worker for assistance and counselling.
- Callers can also request a social worker from the Command Centre to contact them by dialling \*120\*7867# (free) from any cell phone.

## You can also get help at:

- Childline South Africa: 0800 055 555.
- Child Welfare South Africa: 0861 4 CHILD (24453) / 011 452-4110 / email: [info@childwelfare.org.za](mailto:info@childwelfare.org.za)

**Source: Child Protection Week 2023 | South African Government (www.gov.za)**

**Accessed 29 Mar 2023**



## 31 May - World No Tobacco and Drug Abuse Awareness

Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causing many diseases and affecting the health of smokers in general. Quitting smoking has immediate as well as long-term benefits for you and your loved ones.

### Health Effects

### Youth Tobacco Prevention

### Secondhand Smoke

### Electronic Cigarettes

E-cigarettes are sometimes called “e-cigs,” “vapes,” “e-hookahs,” “vape pens,” and “electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS).” Some e-cigarettes look like regular cigarettes, cigars, or pipes. Some look like USB flash drives, pens, and other everyday items.

### What’s the bottom line?

- E-cigarettes have the potential to benefit adult smokers who are not pregnant if used as a complete substitute for regular cigarettes and other smoked tobacco products.
- E-cigarettes are not safe for youth, young adults, and pregnant women, as well as adults who do not currently use tobacco products.

- While e-cigarettes have the potential to benefit some people and harm others, scientists still have a lot to learn about whether e-cigarettes are effective for quitting smoking.
- If you’ve never smoked or used other tobacco products or e-cigarettes, don’t start.
- Additional research can help understand long-term health effects.

### Talking to youth to prevent e-cigarette use

Outbreak of lung injury associated with the use of e-cigarette, or vaping products

**Source: Quit Smoking | Smoking & Tobacco Use | CDC Accessed 29 Mar 2023**

### Quit smoking

**How to QUIT Smoking - CANSA - The Cancer Association of South Africa | CANSA – The Cancer Association of South Africa 29 March 2023**

**Stop smoking | Heart & Stroke Foundation | South Africa | Heart & Stroke Foundation | South Africa (heartfoundation.co.za) 29 March 2023**

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## Aon Resolution Centre (ARC)

If you do not get satisfactory assistance from your medical scheme, please do not hesitate to contact your allocated Aon Employee Benefits Healthcare Consultant or the **Aon Resolution Centre (ARC) on 0860 100 404**. Please remember to get a reference number from your medical scheme when escalating your query to the Aon Resolution Centre (ARC).

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Gap cover policy gives you peace of mind and may cover the unexpected in-hospital shortfalls, out of hospital co-payment and deductibles which are not covered by your medical scheme, that may compromise you financially. The medical schemes shortfalls are a result of medical practitioners such as Anaesthetists, Surgeons and other Specialists charging more than the medical scheme rate, which you as a member are liable for.

We are pleased to inform you that Aon has negotiated a favourable underwriting window period with some Gap Cover providers for you and your family. Please contact Aon on **0860 100 404** or [arc@aon.co.za](mailto:arc@aon.co.za) for further information. You may also contact the Aon Resolution Centre should you require a comparison between your current provider and other Gap cover providers.

**This is not a medical scheme and the cover is not the same as that of a medical scheme. This policy is not a substitute for medical scheme membership.**

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