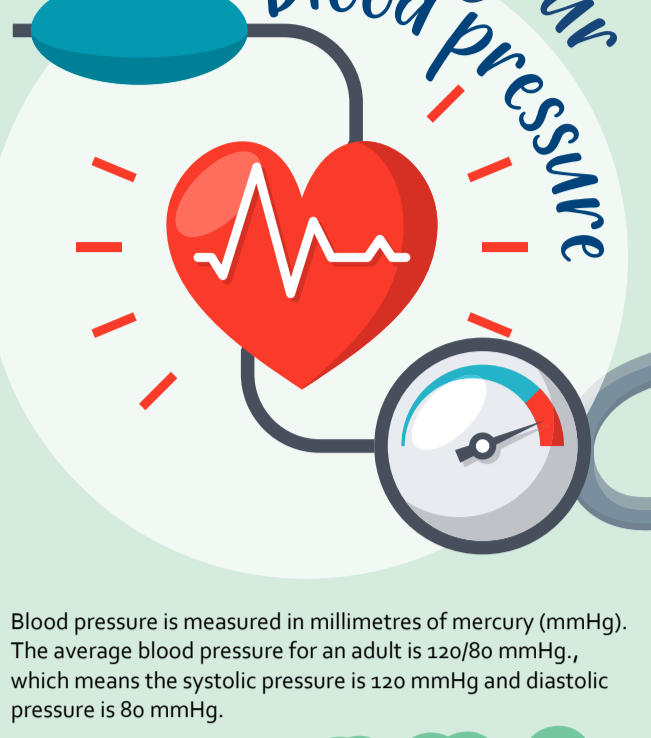


One simple step towards learning more about your health is by getting to know your numbers.

Knowing your numbers means taking action to measure and understand important statistics about your health such as your blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and body weight. When these scores reach unhealthy levels, they can lead to serious cardiovascular disease, which is often symptomless until something serious happens – like a stroke or heart attack. But getting your numbers checked regularly and knowing what they mean is a great first step toward better health.

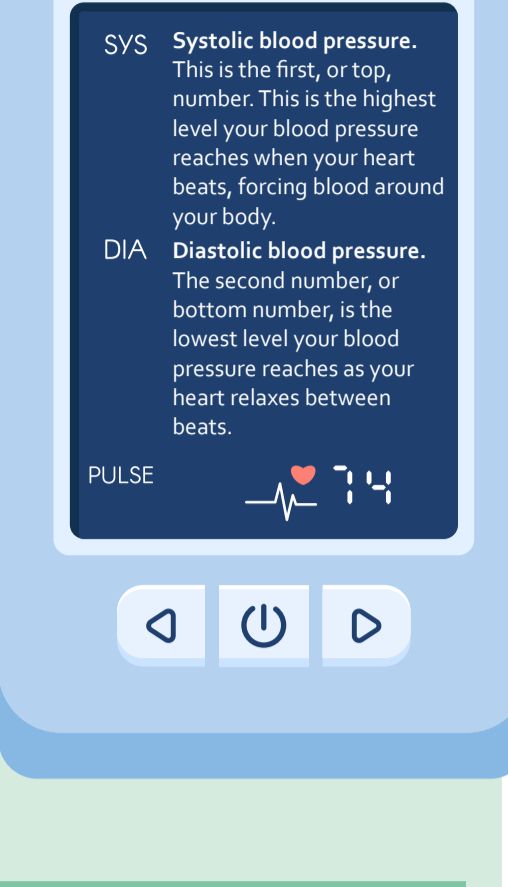
Monitoring your blood pressure



Blood pressure is created when the heart contracts. It pushes blood into blood vessels which creates the pressure so that it reaches all parts of the body.

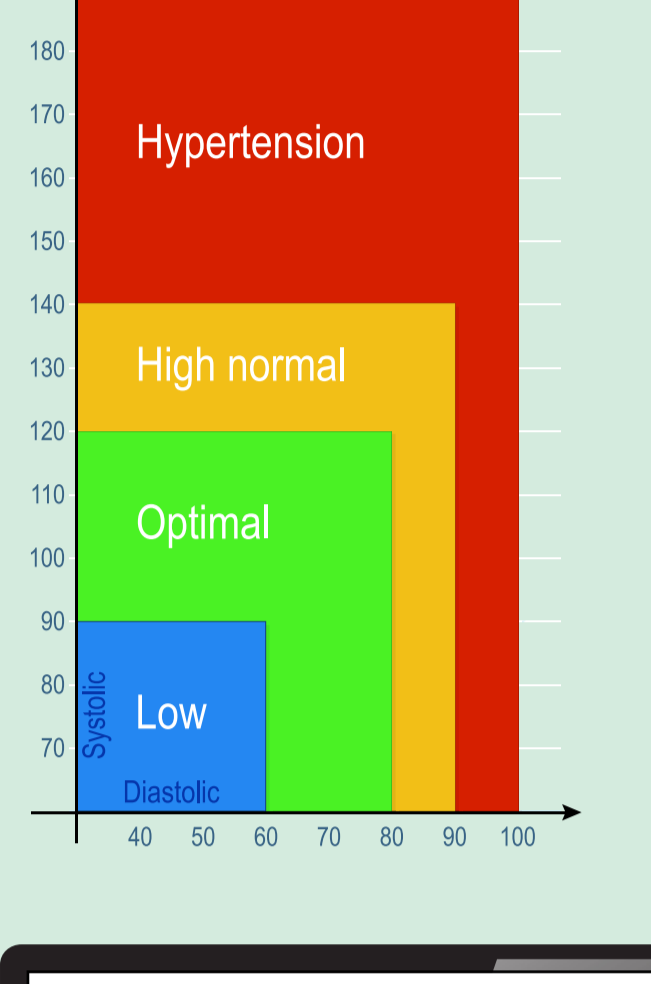
When you have your [blood pressure measured](#), you'll be given two numbers, a top number and a bottom number. This reading will help you understand how healthy your blood pressure is.

Once you know your numbers, you can use the [blood pressure chart](#) to see what they mean and if your blood pressure is in the healthy range.



How to use the blood pressure chart

Simply find your top number (systolic) on the left side of the chart and your bottom number (diastolic) on the bottom. Where the two lines meet is your blood pressure.



What blood pressure readings mean

As you can see from the blood pressure chart, only one of the numbers has to be higher or lower than it should be to count as either high or low blood pressure:

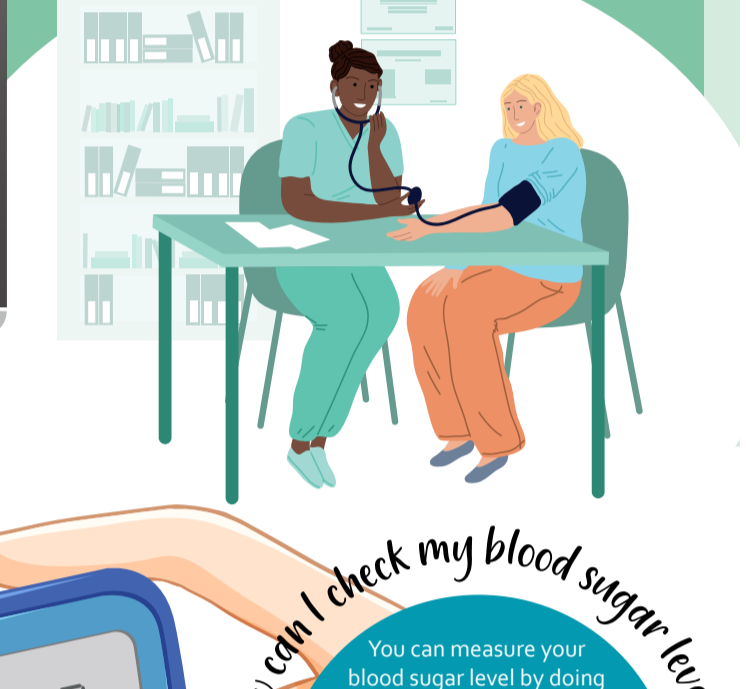
- **90 over 60 (90/60) or less:** You may have low blood pressure, this isn't always a problem, although you may experience some dizziness and fainting as a result.
- **More than 90 over 60 (90/60) and less than 120 over 80 (120/80):** Your blood pressure reading is ideal and healthy. Following a healthy lifestyle will help you to keep it at this level.
- **More than 120 over 80 and less than 140 over 90 (120/80-140/90):** You have a normal blood pressure reading but it is a little higher than it should be. Making healthy changes to your lifestyle may help to lower it to avoid developing high blood pressure in the future.
- **140 over 90 (140/90) or higher (over a number of weeks):** This may indicate that you have high blood pressure (hypertension). You may want to consider seeking advice from a medical professional or reviewing changes to your lifestyle to help bring your blood pressure down.

A single high reading doesn't necessarily mean you have high blood pressure, as many things can affect your blood pressure throughout the day, such as the temperature, when you last ate, and if you're feeling stressed.

Your doctor or nurse will probably want to measure your blood pressure a number of times over a few weeks to make sure the reading wasn't just a one off and that your blood pressure does in fact remain high over time.

Testing your blood pressure at home

Home blood pressure monitoring is an effective and inexpensive way to keep blood pressure under control. If you're someone who has high blood pressure you may be asked to perform home blood pressure monitoring by your GP or practice on a regular basis. Blood pressure tests can be carried out using a patient's own digital blood pressure monitor. [Click here for further guidance on how to measure your blood pressure at home.](#)



Checking your blood sugar levels

Your blood sugar levels, also known as blood glucose levels, are a measurement that show how much glucose you have in your blood. Glucose is a sugar that you get from food and drink and your blood sugar levels go up and down throughout the day. For people living with diabetes these changes are larger and happen more often than in people who don't have diabetes.

Your body usually manages your blood sugar levels by producing insulin, a hormone that allows your cells to use the circulating sugar in your blood. As such, insulin is the most important regulator of blood sugar levels.

Blood sugar management is especially important for people with diabetes, as chronically high blood sugar levels can lead to life threatening complications.

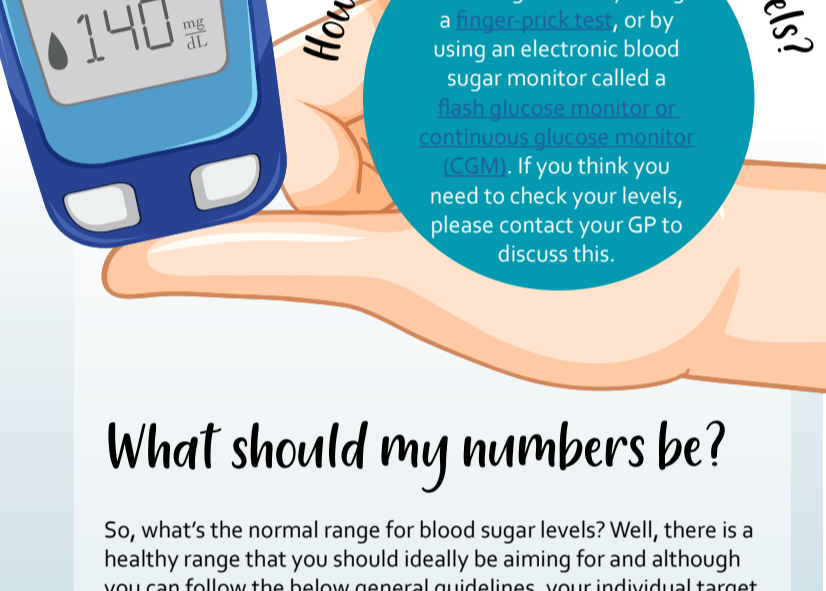
Ways to naturally lower your blood sugar levels

High blood sugar levels occur when your body doesn't make enough of the hormone insulin. Insulin is supposed to control the level of glucose in the blood so when someone doesn't make enough insulin, or it doesn't work properly too much sugar can get into the blood and make the person sick.

There are levels that naturally manage your blood sugar levels. Many of them include making lifestyle changes, like managing your weight, stress levels, sleep quality, exercising, and staying hydrated. That said, some of the biggest improvements have to do with your dietary choices.

Here's a few top tips to help in naturally lowering your blood sugar levels...

- 1 **Exercise** - this increases insulin sensitivity (your cell's ability to use the available sugar in the bloodstream) and helps your muscles use blood sugar for movement. This can lead to reduced blood sugar levels.
- 2 **Reduce your intake of carbohydrates** - Your body breaks down the carbs you eat into glucose, which then raises your blood sugar levels. As such, reducing your carb intake can aid blood sugar regulation.
- 3 **Eating plenty of fibre** - This can aid blood sugar management. Soluble dietary fibre appears to be more effective than insoluble fibre for this purpose. Foods that are high in fibre include vegetables, fruits, legumes (seeds, pulses etc), whole grains.
- 4 **Keep hydrated** - Staying hydrated can reduce blood sugar levels and risk of diabetes. Choose water and zero-calorie drinks and avoid sugar-sweetened beverages.
- 5 **Managing stress levels** - Managing your stress levels through exercise or relaxation methods like yoga may help you regulate blood sugar levels.
- 6 **Get a good night's sleep** - Good sleep helps maintain your blood sugar levels and promotes a healthy weight. On the other hand, poor sleep can disrupt critical metabolic hormones.
- 7 **Snacking between meals** could keep your blood sugar levels from spiking or plummeting throughout the day. But consider your snacks carefully. See some examples of snack ideas below which are rich in magnesium and chromium:
 - whole grain products
 - fruit
 - vegetables
 - nuts
 - dark leafy greens
 - squash and pumpkin seeds
 - tuna
 - dark chocolate
 - bananas
 - avocados
 - beans



How can I check my blood sugar levels?
You can measure your blood sugar level by doing a [finger stick test](#), or by using an electronic blood sugar monitor called a [flash glucose monitor](#) or [continuous glucose monitor \(CGM\)](#). If you think you need to check your levels, please contact your GP to discuss this.

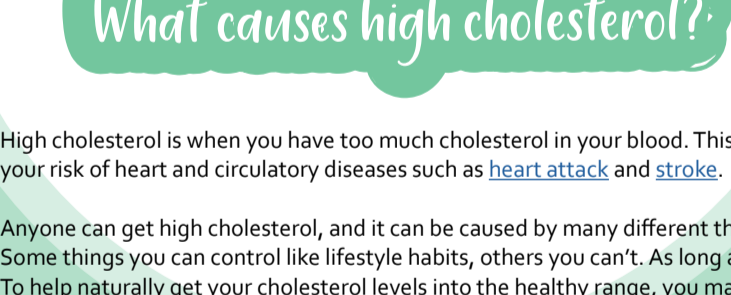
What should my numbers be?

So, what's the normal range for blood sugar levels? Well, there is a healthy range that you should ideally be aiming for and although you can follow the below general guidelines, your individual target range for your blood sugar levels may be different dependant on your individual circumstances. Speak to your GP if you have concerns about your blood sugar levels.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) the expected values for normal fasting blood glucose concentration are between 70 mg/dL (3.9 mmol/L) and 100 mg/dL (5.6 mmol/L). When fasting blood glucose is between 100 to 125 mg/dL (5.6 to 6.9 mmol/L) changes in lifestyle and monitoring glycaemia are recommended.

[For more information visit the mean fasting blood glucose WHO page.](#)

Measuring your blood cholesterol



Everyone has cholesterol in fact we need it to stay healthy because every cell in our body uses it. Cholesterol is a fatty substance found in your blood, it's produced naturally in the liver and some of this cholesterol can come from the food we eat.

It might seem a little daunting but measuring your blood cholesterol is a great first step in becoming healthier. There's a simple test which can be carried out by your doctor, nurse or pharmacist and the results of this test will give you a cholesterol level. If you know your level, you can do something about it.

What causes high cholesterol?

High cholesterol is when you have too much cholesterol in your blood. This can increase your risk of heart and circulatory diseases such as [heart attack](#) and [stroke](#).

Anyone can get high cholesterol, and it can be caused by many different things. Some things you can control like lifestyle habits, others you can't. As long as you take care of the things you can control, you'll help lower your risk. To help naturally get your cholesterol levels into the healthy range, you may need heart-healthy lifestyle changes or medicines.

Some of the things that cause high cholesterol which you can control include...

- eating too much [saturated fat](#)
- [not being active enough](#)
- having too much [body fat](#), especially around your waist.
- [Smoking](#) can lead to high cholesterol levels, and the build-up of tar it causes in your arteries makes it easier for cholesterol to stick to your artery walls.
- If you're [overweight](#) or have [diabetes](#), you're at greater risk of having high cholesterol.

Things that cause high cholesterol you can't control:

- getting older
- gender
- ethnic background
- [Familial Hypercholesterolaemia \(FH\)](#), a form of high cholesterol you're born with
- kidney or liver disease
- Endocrine disorders including hypothyroidism, which is also called [underactive thyroid](#) (when not enough of the thyroid hormone is made) and growth hormone deficiency (when not enough of the growth hormone is made).

[Click here for further guidance on good and bad cholesterol.](#)

What should my cholesterol level be?

Your cholesterol level in the UK is measured in units called millimoles per litre of blood, often shortened to mmol/L

It is recommended that healthy adults should have a total cholesterol level below 5 mmol/L. But these values are only a guide and your doctor or nurse may recommend different levels for you, depending on other risk factors you have such as smoking or being overweight, and other medical conditions such as type 2 diabetes.



Track your body weight

BMI Ranges

For most adults, an ideal BMI is in the 18.5 - 24.9 range.

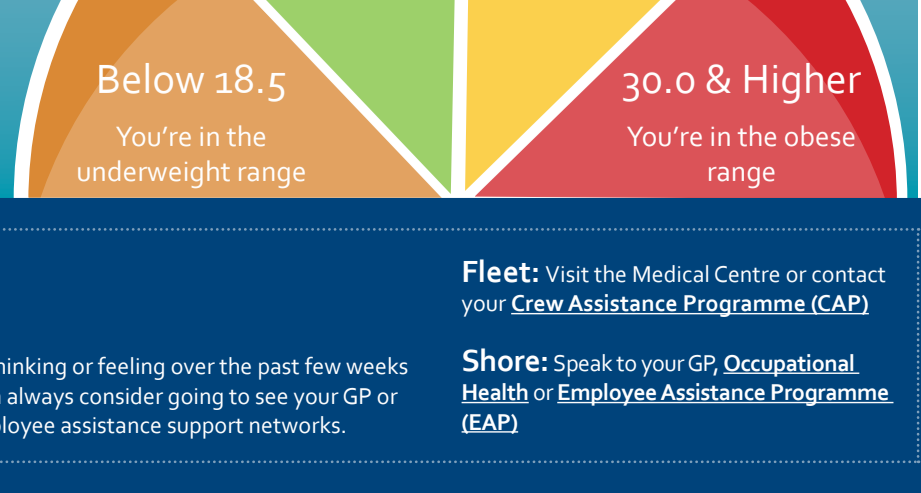
For children and young people aged 2-18, the BMI calculation considers age and gender as well as height and weight.

[If you want to calculate your BMI, try our calculate your body mass index tool.](#)

Professionals as well as calculating your BMI, healthcare professionals may take other factors into account when assessing if you're at a healthy weight. You know your body best so if you're concerned and need further support or advice ensure you contact your GP first.

What should my number be?

Your ideal body weight depends on your gender, age, height and frame. A body mass index (BMI) can be used to estimate a person's body fat and this is done by measuring your height and weight to work out if your weight is healthy. The BMI calculation divides an adult's weight in kilograms by their height in metres squared. For example, A BMI of 25 means 25kg/m2.



Need extra support?
Don't forget if you've noticed changes in the way you're thinking or feeling over the past few weeks or months that concern you or cause you distress, you can always consider going to see your GP or alternatively consider speaking to someone from our employee assistance support networks.

Fleet: Visit the Medical Centre or contact your [Crew Assistance Programme \(CAP\)](#)

Shore: Speak to your GP, [Occupational Health](#) or [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#)