

### Do medications for high blood pressure affect activity?

If you are taking a beta-blocker (for example atenolol) to treat your high blood pressure then you may find that your heart rate does not respond as it normally would to increased activity. Usually when you are active your heart rate goes up. However, taking a beta-blocker can keep your heart rate artificially low. This means that you cannot rely on your heart rate to tell you how hard you are working, or when to slow down, so do take care.

Some medications, such as beta-blockers, can also make you feel tired and lethargic, and therefore you may find increasing your activity levels difficult. If you think that you are suffering from side effects like these, talk to your doctor or nurse.

***Becoming more active will help you to lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke. It will also help you to feel better and healthier. Make it a part of your life!***

For more information and help with managing high blood pressure become a member of the Blood Pressure Association (BPA). For more details call the membership team on 020 8772 4983, or write to us at:

Blood Pressure Association, 60 Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0QS  
[www.bpassoc.org.uk](http://www.bpassoc.org.uk)

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# How to become more active



*A guide to lowering your blood pressure by becoming more active*



### Why should I become more active?

Increasing the amount of activity you do can help you to:

- Lower your blood pressure – regular activity can lower your blood pressure by an average of 4-9 mmHg (systolic, or top number)
- Lose weight or maintain a healthy weight
- Reduce the risk of developing heart disease or a stroke
- Lower blood cholesterol levels
- Reduce the risk of developing diabetes

Being more active does not have to mean going to the gym three times a week – it means being more active in your day-to-day life, every day.

### What kind of activity should I do?

You need to do activity that leaves you warmer and breathing harder than usual, but you should still be able to talk. This is a moderate level of activity. Brisk walking, swimming, cycling, jogging, playing a team sport such as football or hockey, dancing and tennis are all activity that will help you to strengthen your heart and lungs (cardiovascular system).

You should also include activity that strengthens your muscles and helps you to stay supple and flexible. This kind of activity might include climbing stairs, walking uphill, yoga, pilates and gardening. Doing a range of activities will stop you from getting bored and help to keep you motivated.

### How often should I be active?

- Adults should aim to do at least 30 minutes of moderate activity at least five times a week; children should be active for at least one hour each day. 30 minutes of moderate activity will burn off 150-180 calories a day, which could add up to a weight loss of 6-12kgs (13-26lbs) every year. A little bit of activity regularly can make a real difference
- Activities like walking and gardening count, as well as structured exercise sessions such as visiting the gym or playing tennis. Build up slowly by starting with 2 sessions of 15 minutes, or 3 sessions of 10 minutes



- Look for opportunities to be active everyday and make it part of your day-to-day routine. Becoming more active is about changing your habits and your lifestyle until being active becomes a way of life

### Is it safe for me to become more active?

Almost everyone will be able to become more active. However, make sure you check the following before you start:

Have your blood pressure measured and check with your doctor or nurse that it is safe for you to start becoming more active. If your blood pressure is above 180 systolic and/or 110 diastolic (180/110mmHg), you should not be doing intensive activity until your blood pressure has been treated and lowered.

If you also have other medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease or breathing problems you may need different advice. Check with your doctor.

### How do I become more active?

Walking is an ideal activity to start with. It is free and does not need any equipment or particular skill. Start by walking at a pace that is comfortable for you and increase it over a few weeks as it gets easier.

Look at ways in which you can build activity into your life – take the stairs rather than the lift, walk rather than use the car, cycle to work or take the dog on longer walks. Even small changes like these can make a big difference.

Check out local sports centres and clubs, take up a sport that you enjoyed at school or look for activities that you can do with a friend or partner. Join a local walking group or take on a challenge for charity as a goal to aim for.

### Is there anything I can't do?

- Avoid lifting heavy weights or taking part in weight training as this can raise your blood pressure to very high levels for a short time
- Avoid vigorous short bursts of exercise like boxing or squash