



Reading

1 Work in pairs. Discuss these questions.

- 1 What do you know about hypertension?
- 2 What are the causes? What is the usual presentation?
- 3 Have you treated a patient with hypertension? Was it drug or non-drug treatment?

2 Find these items in the text.

- 1 a definition
- 2 an effect of treatment
- 3 prevalence of high BP
- 4 precipitating factors / aetiology of the high BP
- 5 a connection with other illnesses

High Blood Pressure – Hypertension

Hypertension (HT) is commonly called high blood pressure, nowadays (2005 on) defined as above 140/85 mm Hg; or if one is diabetic, over 135/80. About 38% of UK adults have hypertension. Advice and treatment includes exercise, lifestyle changes, and / or diet changes, as well as drugs.

Possibly as many as 16 million UK people have high blood pressure, and the proportion of the population is slowly increasing over the years. About 5% have an obvious underlying cause such as kidney disease. Most of the rest have no single obvious cause. Some have a genetic component, with hypertension tending to run in families. In addition there are environmental and lifestyle factors. The most important causes are being obese, smoking, too much alcohol, too much salt, stress, lack of exercise, poor diet, too little potassium, and family history of relatives with hypertension. Oily fish with

omega-3 fatty acids is protective against high blood pressure and heart disease.

Hypertension – why worry if you feel OK?

High blood pressure does not necessarily make someone feel unwell; however, if untreated it tends to cause damage to blood vessels and the heart. The link between hypertension and coronary heart disease and stroke is very well established.

Correct treatment of hypertension reduces the risk of a heart attack by about 20% and reduces the risk of stroke by about 40%. Here risk is based on the observed reduced occurrences in treated past patients. The purpose of treating hypertension is to prevent this damage to blood vessels and the heart from occurring and so help to prevent these illnesses. Most people with hypertension need tablets to lower their blood pressure. Usually, they need

to continue them for life. These tablets are very successful at preventing heart attacks and strokes and have very few side effects.

Five self-help measures are suggested:

- Avoid being overweight.
- Reduce salt intake.
- Keep alcohol intake down.
- Exercise can reduce your blood pressure and help to keep your weight down. Start slowly and build up. Walking is excellent. Aim for 20 to 30 minutes' activity at least three times a week. Or even better, walk for half an hour five times per week, which is better than more intense exercise for a shorter time.
- Don't smoke.

3 Complete these notes using a word or a number from the text.

- HT for diabetic patients¹ _____
- Modifications to² _____ plus possibly diet and medication recommended
- For³ _____ people not just one cause
- ⁴ _____ fatty acids help against high blood pressure and heart disease
- Connection with coronary heart disease and stroke⁵ _____

4 Discuss in groups:

- How common is hypertension in your country or where you work?
- What measures are being taken to reduce it?
- Are they effective? Give reasons and examples.