



**Get tested today!**

Is your health a priority to you? Do you know your blood pressure number? The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) offers FREE blood pressure screenings to members of the public, saving you money and possibly saving your life. Twice a month, our screening team can be found at a local shopping centre in Cape Town, testing up to 100 people a day. The test is quick, easy and painless.

***Why is it important to get tested?***

High blood pressure (Hypertension) is known as the ‘silent killer’ and unfortunately many South Africans are unaware of the increased risk of not knowing their status. About **six million South Africans** suffer from high blood pressure. “**Two out of three people** with high blood pressure are unaware of the condition. There are many risk factors that predispose one to developing high blood pressure such as an unhealthy diet, excessive alcohol intake, being overweight and lack of exercise,” says Shân Biesman-Simons, Registered Dietitian and Director of Nutrition and Education at the HSFSA.

When people are unaware they are suffering from high blood pressure, they are in danger of damaging their arteries and vital organs and this could ultimately lead to a heart attack, stroke, kidney failure and premature death.

***At what age should you have your blood pressure tested?***

All adults should have annual blood pressure checks especially if they have stressful occupations or a family history of hypertension. If you have been diagnosed with hypertension, you should have regular blood pressure checks as advised by your doctor. It may be a good idea to have blood pressure levels checked from an early age, as even children as young as six years old can have high blood pressure, especially if they are overweight.

## ***At what level is blood pressure high?***

Ideally, your blood pressure should be **lower than 120/80** mm Hg. Readings from 120/80 – 139/89 mmHg are considered pre-hypertension. A systolic blood pressure (top reading) of 140 or higher or a diastolic pressure (bottom reading) of 90 or higher is considered high and should be evaluated by your doctor. Avoid complications from high blood pressure by aiming for levels:

- Less than 140/90 mmHg
- Less than 130/80 mmHg (if you have cardiovascular disease or diabetes)

## ***How to decrease blood pressure levels?***

To keep your blood pressure in a healthy range, you need to:

- ♥ Maintain a healthy weight
- ♥ Eat a diet low in salt and saturated fat
- ♥ Consume adequate potassium-rich foods (fruit, vegetables, nuts, low fat or fat free milk)
- ♥ Get 30 minutes of physical activity on most or all days of the week
- ♥ Limit your alcohol intake to no more than one drink a day for women or two drinks per day for men

“We invite the public to have their blood pressure tested and know their status – for the sake of their heart health,” added Biesman-Simons.

To find out when and where our next free blood pressure screening will be taking place, click on the **Events** page of [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za) or contact **Nuha** on **021 447 4222**.

For more information on how to lower your blood pressure or the risk factors associated with heart disease and stroke, kindly contact the **Heart Mark Diet Line** on **0860 223 222** for free advice from Registered Dietitians or visit [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za) to download our health brochures.

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### **The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA**

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa is a community-based organisation established to reduce the incidence of heart disease and stroke in the population of South Africa by providing education and supporting vital research. For further information visit [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za)