

### **Blood Pressure! What is it?**

Blood pressure is the pressure of blood in the arteries as the heart beats (contracts and relaxes).

#### **How do you know what your blood pressure is?**

When blood pressure is measured it is recorded as two numbers (e.g. 120 over 80). The top number (systolic) demonstrates the pressure in the arteries as the heart contracts. The bottom number (diastolic) indicates the pressure as the heart relaxes before the next beat.

#### **What should my Blood Pressure be?**

Our blood pressure varies to meet our body's changing needs. Normal Blood pressure is 120/80. In some cases medication is needed to keep blood pressure normal.

#### **High Blood Pressure**

Persistent high blood pressure is the result of damaged blood vessels. This results in the heart working harder. This high blood pressure further damages the blood vessels and can cause blockages known as atherosclerosis. The reduced blood supply to the heart, brain and limbs can cause heart attacks, strokes and leg problems such as ulcers or amputation.

#### **What Can I do to reduce my Blood Pressure?**

The following lifestyle changes may help to reduce blood pressure:

- Not smoking
- Managing stress levels
- Eating less salt (sodium)
- Keeping a healthy weight
- Undertake regular exercise
- Reducing alcohol intake

See your doctor annually for health checks and more frequently as directed by your doctor if you require close monitoring. Medications may be needed to keep your blood pressure under control.

#### **Need More Information:**

- Your Local Doctor
- Heart Foundation [www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)