

National Press Release

***Know Your Numbers!* as Nearly 4million Adults Could be Living with Undiagnosed High Blood Pressure**

Just under 4 million adults living in the UK aged 18-64 could be living daily with undiagnosed high blood pressure¹, increasing their chances of stroke, heart attack, kidney disease or unnecessary premature death. That's according to a new consumer poll² by national charity, Blood Pressure UK which found nearly one in ten of the UK population has never had their blood pressure checked.

Given salt intake is a major cause of high blood pressure and with one in five Brits (20%) surveyed consuming nearly double (11.8g) the NHS's recommended amount of salt (6g) in their diet, Blood Pressure UK is urging all adults (of all ages) to check their blood pressure as part of *Know Your Numbers!* Week (2-8th September), telling them the power is in their hands.

High blood pressure is largely symptomless and the single biggest preventable cause of death in the UK, but the more people that test themselves, ideally with a home blood pressure monitor or at a local pharmacy or GP, the more chance they have of controlling it.

Despite nearly 90% (i.e. 87.5%) of the population knowing that salt intake affects blood pressure, over two-fifths (42.5%) of Brits have never made any changes to their diet to reduce salt intake.

Furthermore, whilst nearly 65% of the population claim to be confident in their ability to identify foods high in salt, with bacon and ham being ranked in the poll as the saltiest category (42.3%), respondents were less knowledgeable about how salty cheese is (5.4%).

To put this into context, bacon typically contains an average 3g/100g salt. Morrisons Smoked Streaky Bacon for example, contains 5.6g salt/100g³ – twice the concentration of seawater. In fact, two small rashers contain 0.92g of salt which is saltier than nearly 3x bags of ready salted crisps. A 2-rasher bacon bap with ketchup would make up a 1/3 of your daily salt limit, and if you add an extra 2x rashers, that's half your recommended salt limit reached in just one meal⁴.

In comparison, the average salt content in British Cheddar is 1.78g/100g. The highest salt cheddar from Action on Salt's recent product survey (March 2024) found *Asda's 30% Less Fat Mature British Cheese* had a whopping 2g of salt/100g⁵.

Interestingly, whilst 39% of Brits perceive plant based/vegan food to be low in salt, data from Action on Salt's 2024 survey found the cheeses with the highest level of salt are plant-based, averaging 1.91g/100g. That's nearly 10% saltier than Cheddar.

¹ 2022 ONS Midyear Estimates for 18-64: 40,910,378. (*9.2% = 3.76 million)

² The research was conducted by Censuwide with 2000 UK Respondents (Nat Rep) between 12.06.2024 - 14.06.2024. Censuwide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles and are members of The British Polling Council

³ <https://groceries.morrisons.com/products/morrisons-smoked-streaky-bacon-16-rashers-507985011>

⁴ <https://www.tesco.com/groceries/en-GB/products/308463055> 0.82g salt/roll

<https://www.tesco.com/groceries/en-GB/products/250181618> 0.2g/15ml (tbsp)

⁵ <https://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/salt-surveys/2024/cheese/>

As a nation, if we cut one gram of salt from our average daily salt intake, this would cause a fall in blood pressure and there would be approximately 4,000 fewer premature deaths from strokes and heart attacks each year in the UK.

Phil Pyatt, CEO of Blood Pressure UK comments:

“It’s hard to believe a little bit of salt can have such an impact on our health, especially when it risks raising our blood pressure. Given this, we are urging all adults of all ages to check their blood pressure and take control of their health, along with simple improvements in diet and lifestyle such as eating less salt, more fruit and vegetables and doing more exercise.”

Dr Pauline Swift, Chair of Blood Pressure UK says:

“Reducing salt is the most cost-effective measure to lower blood pressure and reduce the number of people suffering from strokes, heart and kidney disease and life changing disabilities associated with this – all of which is completely avoidable. We hope our new government will encourage the food industry to use much less salt in their products, with strict target-enforcement.”

Hemini Bharadia, Marketing Manager for Blood Pressure UK explains:

"Having your blood pressure checked at home, at your local pharmacy or GP is a cost-effective and reliable method to manage blood pressure, with growing evidence supporting its benefits. With *Know Your Numbers! Week* now upon us, what better way to prioritise your health and get your blood pressure monitored for free. You have the power.”

To find out more visit: bloodpressureuk.org

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About Blood Pressure UK

Blood Pressure UK is the UK’s leading blood pressure charity working to lower the nation’s blood pressure to prevent disability and death from stroke and heart disease. The charity provides information and support for people with high blood pressure and raises awareness to prevent the condition. Blood Pressure UK is the operating name of the Blood Pressure Association, charity reg. 1058944.

Know Your Numbers! Week (which runs from 2nd-8th September 2024) is the UK’s biggest free blood pressure testing and awareness event. The campaign encourages people to have their blood pressure measured so they can take the steps needed to maintain a healthy blood pressure and reduce their risk of debilitating strokes and heart attacks.

Facts about blood pressure from Blood Pressure UK:

- High blood pressure has no obvious signs or symptoms. The only way to find out if you have the condition is to have a blood pressure check.
- Untreated high blood pressure is the major risk factor for strokes, heart attacks and heart failure. It is also a major risk factor for kidney disease and dementia.
- A healthy blood pressure is a level of 120/80mmHg or less.
- A blood pressure of 121/81mmHg to 139/89mmHg is on the high side and lifestyle changes such as eating less salt, more fruit and veg and losing weight if necessary should be advised.
- If readings are consistently at or above 140/90mmHg, high blood pressure is diagnosed, and action should be taken to lower it by leading a healthier lifestyle, and, if necessary, by taking medication as directed by your doctor.

Substantial evidence supporting the use of home blood pressure monitoring has shown it gives a better reflection of blood pressure, as being tested in somewhere like a GP surgery or pharmacy which can make patients feel anxious and can affect the result. What’s more, it allows patients to monitor their condition more easily in the long term. According to NHS England, regular home blood pressure

monitoring across a population of 50,000 patients could prevent up to 500 heart attacks and 745 strokes over five years.

If you choose to measure your blood at home, remember to choose a home blood pressure monitor with an upper arm cuff which is the right size for your arm and make sure it is UK approved.

Blood Pressure UK's 'Top five tips for a healthy blood pressure':

1. **Cut down on salt** – Reducing your salt intake is the quickest way to lower your blood pressure. Don't add it when cooking or at the table, avoid using stock cubes, gravy and soy sauce, check food labels and avoid processed foods high in salt – aim to eat less than 6g a day.
2. **Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables** – at least five different portions every day.
3. **Watch your weight** – try to reach the right weight for your height.
4. **Exercise regularly** – that doesn't have to mean the gym, how about a regular lunchtime walk? 30 minutes five times a week is ideal. If you are unsure about taking up exercise, ask your GP.
5. **Drink alcohol in moderation** – up to 14 units a week for both men and women – a glass of wine or a pint of beer is 2-3 units.