Do I have high blood pressure?

High Blood Pressure: The Silent Killer
Stay healthy: Check your blood pressure

One in three adults worldwide has high blood pressure. The proportion increases with age.

Normal adult blood pressure is defined as a systolic blood pressure of 120 mmHg and a diastolic blood pressure of 80 mmHg. Hypertension is defined as a systolic blood pressure equal to or above 140 mmHg and/or diastolic blood pressure equal to or above 90 mmHg. Normal levels of both systolic and diastolic blood pressure are particularly important for the efficient function of vital organs such as the heart, brain and kidneys and for overall health and well-being.

There is a common misconception that people with high blood pressure always experience symptoms. Most people with high blood pressure actually have no symptoms at all and may not even know they have it. Sometimes high blood pressure can cause symptoms such as headache, shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain, palpitations of the heart or nose bleeds. If people ignore measuring blood pressure because they think symptoms will alert them to the problem, it can be dangerous because high blood pressure is often a silent killer. Everyone should know his or her blood pressure numbers.

High blood pressure – also known as raised blood pressure or hypertension – is a condition in which the blood circulates at a persistently increased pressure.

Many factors increase the risk of developing high blood pressure.

Blood pressure is expressed in millimetres of mercury (mmHg). It is recorded as two numbers, usually one written above the other. The top number is the systolic blood pressure. It is the highest pressure in blood vessels, which occurs as the heart contracts (heartbeat). The lower number is the diastolic blood pressure. It is the lowest pressure in blood vessels and occurs between heartbeats, when the heart muscle relaxes.

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Starting healthy

In Asia, 10% of maternal deaths are associated with high blood pressure

• All pregnant women should have their blood pressure checked and managed by healthcare providers
• Help pregnant women who smoke to quit and to avoid second-hand smoke
• Exclusively breast-fed babies are less likely to have high blood pressure later in life

World Health Organization
Western Pacific Region