

2-8 September 2024

Know Your Numbers Week encourages people to get their blood pressure tested. Many people have high blood pressure without knowing it which can cause other health problems. As well as understanding your **blood pressure**, it's also important to understand your **cholesterol**, **blood sugar** and **body mass index**.



The more you know about these key health numbers the more you can do to take steps to look after yourself and lead a long and healthy life.

This guide will provide you with some self-tests that you can do yourself at home and also information on how to improve your overall wellbeing.

Your weight

The vast majority of people will know if they are carrying too much weight or not.

If you don't own a set of scales, then you can use the waist to hip ratio. All you need to do is measure your hip at the widest point and your waist at just above the belly button. Then what you do is divide your waist size by your hip size.

- A ratio of 0.95 or below for men is good and 0.80 and below for women.
- 1.0 or higher for men and 0.85 or higher for women is greater risk of poor health.

Alternatively you can just measure your waist:

- The ideal waist size is 35 inches for men and 32.5 inches for women.
- A waist size for men of 40 inches (102cm) and 35 inches (88cm) for women increases the risk of diabetes and heart disease significantly.

Waist size is important because its all about where you store your fat. If you store your fat around the waist then its sitting around your vital organs such as the liver and kidneys, which will increase the chance of diabetes and cholesterol.

Blood pressure

You can get your blood pressure checked with your GP or you can buy your own machine for around £20 to £30. Your heart responds to virtually everything that happens in your body and you can learn a lot from blood pressure by analysing the readings. Although the most common way is to look at the actual level of the diastolic and systolic readings e.g. 120/80 the other useful analysis is to look at the pulse pressure difference which is the difference between the higher and lower figures.

If the difference is continually above 60 e.g. 140/80 - then it could be an indicator of **arteriosclerosis** or hardening of the arteries. The reason being that the arteries are having to expand too far and if they do that continually they lose their elasticity.

If you don't have a blood pressure machine, you can simply do pulse testing either manually yourself by counting the number beats from the pulse (against your neck or inside your wrist) or through a free app on your phone.

Your pulse is an important test and it's a good idea to get to understand your pulse. A healthy person should have a resting pulse rate of between 60 to 100 beats per minute.

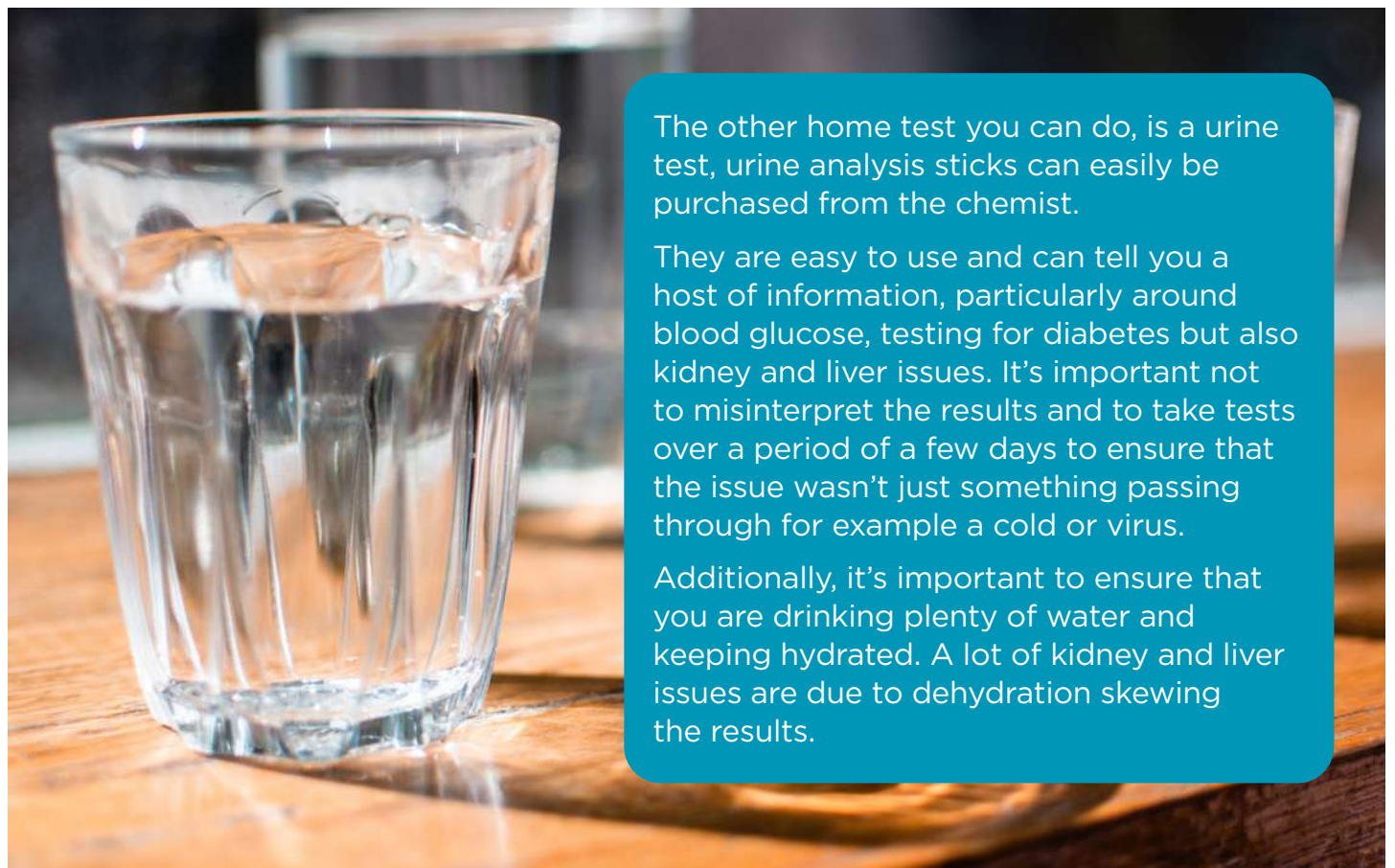
However, it is possible to have a resting pulse rate as low as 35 if you are extremely fit. If you are not extremely fit and regularly have a heart rate outside of 60-100 beats per minute then you should visit your G.P.

When you understand your average pulse rate, and for example you know that your

pulse is regularly in the low 60's and all of a sudden its 85 - then unless you know why it's changed so radically (85 over the course of 3 days) then again it may be worth calling your G.P.

If you are taking your pulse manually you will start to understand how it feels and if it feels irregular then again it's something that you might raise with your G.P.

One of the causes of high pulse pressure can be stress and it can be improved by doing relaxation breathing exercises.



The other home test you can do, is a urine test, urine analysis sticks can easily be purchased from the chemist.

They are easy to use and can tell you a host of information, particularly around blood glucose, testing for diabetes but also kidney and liver issues. It's important not to misinterpret the results and to take tests over a period of a few days to ensure that the issue wasn't just something passing through for example a cold or virus.

Additionally, it's important to ensure that you are drinking plenty of water and keeping hydrated. A lot of kidney and liver issues are due to dehydration skewing the results.



Cancer self-tests

Everyone should be checking their skin regularly for changes to moles and spots that don't appear to heal. We should all be checking our breasts, testicles, armpits, neck and groin for lumps.

It's recommended that you keep a record of your checking and in the case of skin checks don't be afraid to take photo's so that you have got something to refer back to in the future to assess changes.

Additionally, other symptoms to look out for are blood in the urine and stool, regular pain in the kidneys and stomach without any apparent reason and increased need to go to the toilet at night when you haven't been drinking excessively.

If you are worried about anything then ensure you make an appointment to see your GP.

How to stay healthy

Exercise is the key, if you don't like exercise or don't have a lot of time, then try high intensity training.

For example, use an exercise bike for 10 minutes every day, within this 10 mins, do 30 seconds of sprinting followed by 30 seconds of relaxing riding.

You could also do the same thing by sprinting and walking between lamp posts or on a step box. Or do weight bearing exercise in the same way, using quite light weights, but fast reps. Weight bearing exercise is important because you lose about 1% of muscle every year over the age of 40. Muscle speeds up metabolism and metabolism burns fat.

High intensity exercise was designed by Dr Tabata and research shows that it is a form of exercise that is very good at reducing blood sugar and therefore avoiding diabetes.

Another big reason for increasing exercise is to do with stress. Exercise can work as a distraction for your brain constantly either thinking about work or other issues. Exercise helps people to switch off.





As well as exercise, it's also important to relax. [Mindfulness](#) is great to help you switch off, as many people struggle to do this on their own, apps such as Headspace and Thrive tend to help focus the mind.

Relaxation techniques are not just about the brain they also really help the heart. Reading is also a great way to relax, it can help distract the brain from more stressful issues.

For more details read our stress awareness guide [here](#).

Nutrition

Nutrition is now more important than ever, having a balanced diet helps ensure we have the correct nutrients. Dark green leafy vegetables and colourful fruits and especially fruits with red in them can really make a difference. These will ensure you get vitamin C, vitamin D and zinc on board.

It's also important to reduce the amount of processed fats you eat, as these types of fat stick around your waist and increase issues such as heart disease.

These types of fats are found in many takeaways.

Water is massively undervalued, every organ in the body needs hydrating, water is needed in order for the fat burning process to work, depending on your size and how much exercise you are doing, you need to drink 2-3 litres per day.

Our bodies were not designed to sit down on chairs, sitting down as much as we do fundamentally squashes our skeleton, which can lead to musculoskeletal problems.

What we need to do is move more, the HSE recommend a 10 minute movement break from sitting down every hour. The key is to try to introduce movement into the daily routine e.g take all telephone calls standing up where you can and taking a break for lunch away from the desk and go for a walk.

For more information read our [Healthy Eating guide here](#).



Boosting your immune system

Having a strong immune system is important in order to be able to fight off a variety of illnesses and infections. In order to increase the ability to produce antibodies and ensure that your T-cell levels (lymphocytes) are not reduced you can:

- Increase your level of vitamin D – spend time outside, drink fortified milk, eat fortified cereal, salmon, mackerel and sardines.
- Increase your level of vitamin C – eat plenty of citrus fruits like grapefruit and oranges, Red Bell Peppers (3 times the vitamin C of an orange), Broccoli, Garlic, Ginger, Spinach, Yoghurt, Almonds, Sunflower Seeds, Turmeric, Green Tea, Papaya, Kiwi, Poultry, Shellfish (it's important to take vitamin C daily because your body can't store it).
- Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink, as it damages the immune system.
- Ensure you relax, exercise and have good quality sleep as all of these boost the immune system.
- Take an immune busting vitamin tablet every day.

Sleep

Many people use their mobile phones for alarms and look at them right up until we turn the lights off, without giving their minds time to start to relax. Before going to sleep it's important to be as relaxed as possible, the room to be dark and for it to be the right temperature.

It's also important to have coping skills on how to relax your minds if you do wake up in the middle of the night, in order to maximise the relaxation of the nervous, respiratory and cardiovascular systems.

For more information read our Sleep guide [here](#).



Worrying about money can be extremely stressful and may lead to mental health conditions. Police Mutual are here to help. We want to break down the stigma surrounding debt and get people talking about money.

We've teamed up with **PayPlan***, one of the UK's leading free debt advice providers, who offer free and confidential advice to anyone in serious financial difficulties.

They're able to advise you on a range of debt solutions suited to your individual circumstances, helping to protect you and your family with a sustainable way to manage your debt.

Get free and confidential help to combat your debt, call **PayPlan*** on **0800 197 8433**.

Police Mutual Services

Our Care Line Service provided by Health Assured can offer advice and information, helping with a range of concerns including emotional support.

Wisdom App



Download the **Wisdom App** provided by Health Assured and register today - your code is **MHA107477**



To read more of our wellbeing guides take a look at our **Wellbeing Hub** [here](#).

Call us **0151 242 7640** Visit **policemutual.co.uk**
We're open from **9am - 5pm Mon - Fri**

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