



EXERCISE AND BLOOD PRESSURE

What is it?

How does it affect me?

What affect will exercise have on it?

WHAT IS IT?

Blood is carried from the heart around your body in vessels called arteries. Blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the walls of these arteries. Every time the heart beats (roughly 60-70 times a minute at rest), it pumps out blood into the arteries. Your blood pressure is at it's highest as the heart beats, pumping the blood around the body. This is called Systolic pressure. When the heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is known as the Diastolic Pressure, and is measured in millimetres of Mercury.





EXERCISE AND BLOOD PRESSURE

What is it?

How does it affect me?

What affect will exercise have on it?

HOW DOES IT AFFECT ME?

A reading over 140/90 or above is generally considered as high. High blood pressure is referred to as Hypertension and is considered as a coronary heart disease risk.

Although it is rare for high blood pressure to cause an immediate risk, it's long-term damage to the body is widespread and serious. The greatest risks are death due to stroke or heart disease. High blood pressure may affect the following areas of the body in particular:-

- **The Heart** - In some people, usually after a few years, the main pumping chamber of the heart (the left ventricle) will enlarge and therefore weaken. Heart failure may follow, causing fatigue and breathlessness.
- **Stroke** - around a third of all strokes are linked to high blood pressure.
- **Kidneys** - may be damaged by constantly raised blood pressure. This may affect the process of the body getting rid of unwanted substances that may lead to ill health and kidney failure.
- **The Eyes** - Eyesight may be affected and may even be permanently damaged.



EXERCISE AND BLOOD PRESSURE

What is it?

How does it affect me?

What affect will exercise have on it?

WHAT AFFECT WILL EXERCISE HAVE ON IT?

Blood pressure fluctuates during the day. It is at its lowest when you sleep and rises when you get up. It can also rise when you are excited, nervous, anxious or active. For most of the day, your blood pressure stays pretty much the same particularly when you are sitting or standing still. An acceptable level is 120/80. When blood pressure reaches 140/90 or higher, this is regarded as hypertension. With high blood pressure, the heart is forced to work harder, much like the effort required to blow hard through a straw is higher than that needed to blow through a larger tube.

Anything that lowers blood pressure in turn reduces the workload of the heart. Research indicates that regular activity will contribute to the lowering of blood pressure. In addition studies show that regular activity helps to maintain the elasticity of the blood vessels as one goes through the stages of the ageing process.

Some people even have problems when the blood pressure is too low. Ever bent down to do your shoe lace up, stood up too quickly and felt a little dizzy? Or maybe you've been working hard on a treadmill, and stopped suddenly, and felt a little unbalanced?

Regular physical activity teaches the body to effectively distribute blood to the working muscles throughout the period of exercise encouraging blood flow to where the body needs it.

With regular activity there will be an adaptation that increases the blood flow throughout the body that enhances the performance of both the heart and skeletal system. These changes serve to lower the heart rate and blood pressure during the physical activity in turn reducing the stress placed on the body.

Changes in blood pressure can also be the consequence of weight loss or reduced stress, both of which are known outcomes of physical activity.

If you want to find out more o how blood pressure, or the heart helps you to exercise speak to a member of the Edenmore Country Club Fitness Team