



National Prescribing Service Limited

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **High blood pressure: the silent killer of the century**

High blood pressure is often referred to as a 'silent killer' because most people don't feel any symptoms until it has caused considerable damage to their body. High blood pressure affects more than 2 million Australians and contributes to thousands of deaths every year.

In the latest edition of *MedicinesTalk*, the National Prescribing Service (NPS) recommends people have their blood pressure checked regularly even if they feel healthy, aren't overweight and don't have a family history of high blood pressure.

"High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, increases your chances of developing serious health problems like stroke, heart attack, dementia and kidney disease," NPS CEO Dr Lynn Weekes said.

"Given its silent nature, most people with high blood pressure don't feel sick, so they don't realise they have a problem. Usually the only way of knowing there is a problem is by having your blood pressure checked by a health professional."

How often your blood pressure should be checked depends on your age and health. Blood pressure is considered high if it's greater than 140/90 mmHg (or 140 over 90). Your doctor may recommend starting medicines to help reduce blood pressure, depending on your overall risk of cardiovascular disease. If you have other health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or kidney disease your doctor may recommend you start treatment at a lower level of blood pressure.

For some people, lifestyle changes such as losing weight, reducing the amount of salt in their food, exercising regularly and quitting smoking are enough to reduce their blood pressure to normal levels.

Others will need to take blood pressure medicines long term — usually for the rest of their lives — so it's important to know about side effects and which medicines can impact on the efficacy of the medicine and the importance of continuing with healthy lifestyle and low salt intake.

"Even if you have no cause for concern, having your blood pressure checked is painless, quick and easy, and it might just save your life," Dr Weekes said.

For more information about blood pressure download the latest edition of *MedicinesTalk* at [www.nps.org.au/consumers/publications/medicines\\_talk](http://www.nps.org.au/consumers/publications/medicines_talk) or contact 02 8217 8700.

**ENDS**

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*The National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation for quality use of medicines funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.*