

- Medical awareness

# Awareness and Action Against a Silent Killer

*Hypertension is becoming a serious problem, and many are not even aware of it*

An increasing number of Filipinos have hypertension or elevated blood pressure—one of the major risk factors for debilitating heart diseases and stroke, both of which are the world's leading causes of death.

However, many people do not even realize that their blood pressure is rising. This is the main reason why hypertension is now considered to be a silent killer. According to the *Lancet* medical journal, approximately one out of four adults has hypertension worldwide. It is expected to affect more than 1.5 billion people by 2025.

In Asia, home to half of the world's population, the prevalence of elevated blood pressure ranges from highs of about 31 percent in Mongolia, 27 percent in Nepal, 25 percent in India, and 24 percent in Cambodia, to lows of 11 percent in South Korea, 14 percent in Singapore, 15 percent in Australia, and 17 percent in Japan.

In China, more than 19 percent of adults have elevated blood pressure, with Indonesia at nearly 24 percent, Vietnam above 23 percent, the Philippines at nearly 23 percent, and Thailand above

22 percent. These rates compare with about 13 percent in the United States and Canada, and about 15 percent in the United Kingdom.

Ignoring hypertension has grave consequences. Not only does it affect you personally, but also puts burden on the family, the economy, and society.

"Hypertension is a serious issue for millions of people across the markets we serve in Asia," said **Anil Wadhvani**, CEO of Manulife Asia. "As a major life insurer, we want to help peo-



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ple live better lives. So we're delighted to team up with the World Heart Federation and help more people take steps towards a healthier lifestyle."

Here are some ways to lower your blood pressure:

**Stay active:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity five times a week. Walk, dance, swim, do housework, or play a sport—they all count.

**Eat well:** Cut down on salt, sugar, fat, and processed foods. Eat at least five portions (handfuls) of fruit and vegetables every day. If you drink alcohol, reduce your consumption.

**Stop smoking:** Quitting tobacco is the single best thing you can do to improve your heart health.

**Control your weight:** Being overweight or obese raises your risk of high blood pressure.

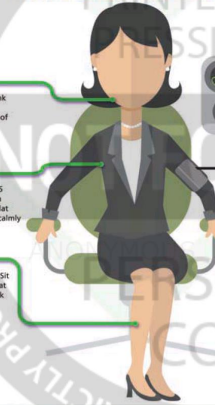
The problem with hypertension being a silent killer is that it does not have any signs and symptoms, especially in the early stages. Individuals

## Blood Pressure Measurement Instructions

Don't smoke, exercise, drink caffeinated beverages or alcohol within 30 minutes of measurement.

Rest in a chair for at least 5 minutes with your left arm resting comfortably on a flat surface at heart level. Sit calmly and don't talk.

Make sure you're relaxed. Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor with your back straight and supported.



Every time you measure, take 3 readings, separated by at least 1 minute and record all the results.

Use properly calibrated and validated instrument. Check the cuff size and fit.

Try to take readings in the early morning and evening.

### Recommended blood pressure levels

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC (mm Hg)	and	DIASTOLIC (mm Hg)
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80
Prehypertension	120-139	or	80-89
High	more than 140	and	more than 90

Source: The International Society of Hypertension



could go on with their lives for years without knowing they have hypertension until symptoms manifest due to complications and severe damages to the heart and other body organs, such as the kidneys, occur. It no longer just affects the adult population. Cases among children and teenagers with hypertension are not uncommon nowadays.

Awareness is the beginning. "See your doctor to get your blood pressure checked," said Dr. **David Wood**, president of the World Heart Federation. "It's quick and painless but it could save your life because high blood pressure can be treated and prevented—often by making a few changes to your diet, activity levels, and unhealthy habits."

It is important to know how to interpret your blood pressure values. It is assessed by taking two measurements: systolic (maximum) and diastolic (minimum). These two values are expressed as maximum/minimum.

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**Normal:** Maximum of less than 120 and minimum of less than 80

**Pre-hypertension:** Maximum of 120 to 139 or minimum of 80 to 89

**High:** Maximum of over 140 or minimum of more than 90

**Emergency:** Maximum of above 180 or minimum of above 110 requires immediate medical attention

Don't be a victim of the silent killer. Be aware and take action now.

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