

## **Irish Heart Foundation: Blood Pressure Check Encouraged 'Before Damage is Done' (<https://www.activelink.ie/node/108181>)**

The Irish Heart Foundation is urging people to avoid a 'silent killer' by getting their blood pressure checked.

The three-minute checks with GPs or local pharmacies are a vital tool in detecting high blood pressure, which can lead to heart attack, stroke, heart failure, kidney failure and dementia.

"What you don't know could kill you as this condition, in the vast majority of cases, has no symptoms," warned Janis Morrissey, Director of Health Promotion with the Irish Heart Foundation.

The Irish Heart Foundation is leading the 'Before Damage is Done' campaign this May Measurement Month to encourage adults, particularly those aged over-50, to get checked.

Blood pressure is a measure of how effectively the heart pumps blood around the body – and a high reading, called hypertension, is manageable through a combination of medication and lifestyle changes.

"It is quick, easy and pain free and does not involve a blood test."

The campaign targets those who may be living with high blood pressure without their knowledge, the risk of which increases with age.

The most recent CSO yearly data shows that 9,652 lives were lost in 2022 due to heart disease and stroke.

The normal level of blood pressure is about 120 over 80, with high blood pressure defined as 140 over 90 or higher.

Everyone aged over 30 should get checked every five years and a GP can assess the overall level of risk and may advise more frequent checks.

"There could be a history of hypertension in your family so a GP will look at cholesterol, weight and lifestyle factors to assess your cardiac health," added Ms Morrissey.

Dr Angie Brown, Consultant Cardiologist and Medical Director with the Irish Heart Foundation said: "High blood pressure is the biggest risk factor for stroke, as well as heart conditions, heart attacks and dementia.

"Thousands of local pharmacies across Ireland offer free blood pressure checks, while most GPs will carry them out during general consultations."

Prescribed medication is a key tool in managing hypertension, but lifestyle changes such as healthy eating, increasing physical activity, quitting smoking and limiting alcohol consumption are also crucial.

Patients are advised to seek advice on changing medication or lowering dosage if they suffer debilitating side effects.

Dr David McConaghy, ICGP/HSE Integrated Care Lead for Prevention said: "The Irish College of General Practitioners supports this campaign to raise awareness about blood pressure and encourage people to attend their GP practice for a cardiovascular review."

Sinead Mc Cool, Acting Head of Professional Services at the Irish Pharmacy Union said: "The Irish Pharmacy Union fully supports this initiative and we continue to encourage people to get their blood pressure checked in their local pharmacy before damage is done.

"Pharmacies nationwide offer blood pressure testing and many also offer 24-hour blood pressure monitoring. Call to your local pharmacy today to learn more."

The Irish Heart Foundation, in partnership with Medicare LifeSense is encouraging blood pressure checks 'Before Damage is Done' in local participating pharmacies in May and June. To support the Irish Heart Foundation, Medicare LifeSense and participating pharmacies will team up and donate a percentage of the sales of their Medicare LifeSense blood pressure monitors during May and June. This donation will go towards the vital work of the Irish Heart Foundation.

### **Region**

Nationwide

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