

## Mild Hypertension

Mild hypertension is defined as a systolic (upper figure) of 140 to 159 systolic and diastolic (lower figure) of up to 90 to 99 diastolic. It is very common affecting millions of people in the UK. Keep in mind that blood pressure goes up with age so it far less significant in older age groups.

There is no question that treating severe hypertension dramatically reduces the risk of a stroke but does treating mild hypertension do the same? – The huge MRC trial involving 17,000 people gave us an answer. It looked at patients with a BP with a diastolic between 90 and 110. Did it did reduce strokes? Yes but only marginally. It improved the chance of not having a stroke from 97.4% to 98.6%. Once the maths was done, they found it would take 9000 years of treatment to prevent one death. This minor benefit needs to be balanced against the side-effects of treatment which are quite common.

More recently, the independent Cochrane Collaborative looked at mild hypertension again (BP of 140-159 systolic, 90-99 diastolic), examining 5 trials involving 8,919 patients. The result was that treatment made no difference to either cardiovascular events (such as heart attacks) or strokes.

To conclude: for most people who have mild hypertension, drugs will make little difference and lifestyle changes are more important.