



# What are Canadians with hypertension doing to control their high blood pressure?

# 2009

› People with high blood pressure, also called hypertension, are at increased risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. **One in five Canadians over the age of 20 years** are aware that they have this condition.<sup>1</sup>

› **78% of Canadians with hypertension** considered their blood pressure to be well-controlled.

## Fast Facts from the *2009 Survey on Living with Chronic Diseases in Canada*

The Canadian Hypertension Education Program currently recommends that people with hypertension:

- Aim to lower their blood pressure below 140/90 mmHg, and in those with diabetes or chronic kidney disease below 130/80 mmHg
- Have their blood pressure monitored regularly by a health professional
- Monitor their blood pressure at home, using a home blood pressure monitor endorsed by the Canadian Hypertension Society
- Have a plan for controlling their blood pressure
- Make and maintain healthy lifestyle changes, the cornerstone for controlling high blood pressure. These lifestyle changes include:
  - › Reducing dietary sodium (salt)
  - › Eating a diet that emphasizes vegetables, fruits, dairy and meats low in saturated fat
  - › Engaging in 30-60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity 4-7 days per week
  - › Maintaining a healthy body weight
  - › Limiting alcohol consumption
  - › Quitting smoking
- Take appropriate medication to control their high blood pressure as prescribed by their doctor

The Public Health Agency of Canada's **2009 Survey on Living with Chronic Disease in Canada** provides new information on how well Canadians with hypertension are following these recommendations. This recent survey, conducted by Statistics Canada, interviewed a nationally-representative sample of 6,142 people with self-reported high blood pressure diagnosed by a health professional.

### *Maintaining healthy blood pressure involves ongoing monitoring*

#### **Blood pressure at healthy levels**

- 78% of Canadians with hypertension considered their blood pressure to be well-controlled
- 4% considered their blood pressure high and 17% considered their blood pressure to be borderline high; less than 1% reported that they did not know

- › Most **people with hypertension (95%)** reported having had their blood pressure checked by a health professional at least once in the past year.
- › The **majority of Canadians with hypertension (85%)** felt they had a plan to control their blood pressure.
- › **Ninety-three percent (93%)** felt they had enough information to control their blood pressure.
- › **Most Canadians with hypertension (82%)** reported taking blood pressure medication.

#### **Blood pressure checked regularly**

- Most people with hypertension (95%) reported having had their blood pressure checked by a health professional at least once in the past year; 5% of Canadians with hypertension reported not having a family doctor
- 46% of Canadians with hypertension reported monitoring their blood pressure at home; of these, two thirds said they had been shown how by a health professional

#### **Plan to control high blood pressure**

- The majority of Canadians with hypertension (85%) felt they had a plan to control their blood pressure
- Over half of people with hypertension (53%) said they had never discussed a target for their blood pressure with a health professional
- Nearly all (93%) felt they had enough information to control their blood pressure
- 66% of individuals with hypertension said they would like to receive information and training on hypertension during medical appointments

#### *Managing high blood pressure with lifestyle changes and/or medication*

#### **People with hypertension reported having tried to change their lifestyle behaviours to control their blood pressure or for other reasons**

- 89% reported limiting their salt intake
- 89% reported changing the types of foods they eat
- 80% reported having tried exercise or participating in physical activities
- 66% reported having tried to control their weight or lose weight, an additional 26% felt they were already at a healthy body weight
- Of those who smoked, 75% reported having quit or reduced smoking
- Of those who drank more alcohol than recommended, 57% reported having reduced the amount they consume

#### **Many individuals with hypertension had not adopted or maintained healthy lifestyles and healthy weights that would help control their high blood pressure**

- 58% of Canadians with hypertension were physically inactive, based on self-reported leisure-time physical activity
- 71% of Canadians with hypertension were overweight or obese, based on self-reported height and weight
- 58% reported not eating five to ten servings of fruit and vegetables per day
- 17% reported smoking daily or occasionally

#### **Medication is an important element in controlling blood pressure**

- Most Canadians with hypertension (82%) reported taking blood pressure medication. Of these, 62% said they took 1 medication, 27% took 2 medications and 11% were taking 3 or more medications for their blood pressure
- 10% of individuals with hypertension reported not taking medication because their blood pressure was being controlled without medication

- › Most Canadians with hypertension reported that their blood pressure was well-controlled. However, **a substantial portion of people with hypertension (one in four)** reported that their blood pressure was not well-controlled.

### Summary

Most Canadians with hypertension reported that their blood pressure was well-controlled, and they were taking medication, had a plan and had enough information to manage their hypertension. Programs like the Canadian Hypertension Education Program and others have contributed to this success.

However, a substantial portion of people with hypertension (one in four) reported that their blood pressure was not well-controlled, some people (one in twenty) didn't have a family physician, and many were physically inactive (58%), overweight or obese (71%), smoked daily (17%), and didn't eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day (58%). Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and having a healthy weight are cornerstones of hypertension control and reduce the need for medication.

#### Additional information on high blood pressure can be found online at:

- The Public Health Agency of Canada: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/cvd-mcv/hypertension-eng.php>
- The Canadian Hypertension Education Program: <http://hypertension.ca/chep/>
- Blood Pressure Canada: <http://hypertension.ca/bpc/>
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation: <http://heartandstroke.ca/>

#### More information about the 2009 Survey on Living with Chronic Disease in Canada can be found online at:

- Statistics Canada: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5160&lang=fr&db=imdb&adm=8&dis=2>

#### References:

1. Public Health Agency of Canada. Hypertension Facts and Figures. Retrieved October 2009. [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/cvd-mcv/hypertension\\_figures-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/cvd-mcv/hypertension_figures-eng.php)