

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Managing your blood pressure over the holiday season**

For thousands of Australians who have high blood pressure or some form of heart disease keeping healthy over the Christmas season can be difficult. People may be more likely to drink alcohol and eat foods high in salt, fat or sugar, while exercise programs fall by the wayside.

The latest edition of ***Australian Prescriber***, an independent medical journal published by the National Prescribing Service Limited, looks at lifestyle changes around smoking, nutrition, alcohol and physical activity, based on recently updated guidelines from the Heart Foundation.

“People with high blood pressure or heart disease should avoid high-salt processed foods including ham, bacon, sausages, canned or packet soups, stock cubes, as well as salty snacks, takeaway foods high in salt, and salt added during cooking or at the table,” said Dr Huang, National Manager of Clinical Programs at the Heart Foundation.

It is recommended that daily salt intake is limited to 4 grams or less by choosing foods normally processed without salt or foods labelled 'no added salt' or 'low salt'.

The Heart Foundation guidelines state that alcohol consumption should be kept to a maximum of two standard drinks a day for men or one standard drink a day for women. Both men and women should have at least two alcohol-free days each week.

Physical activity should not be forgotten over the holiday period. It lowers blood pressure, protects the heart in other ways and helps people to lose weight.

“Aim to increase your breathing and heart rate for 30 minutes on most, if not all days of the week. This 30 minutes of exercise can be made up in shorter bouts, such as three 10-minute walks, making it easier to fit into the day,” Dr Huang said.

Being active will help take weight off the waist. As a guide, waist circumference for men should be less than 94 centimetres and less than 80 centimetres for women.

Many New Year’s resolutions involve quitting smoking, but given the damage every cigarette is doing, the sooner you quit the sooner you feel the benefits. While many smokers quit ‘cold turkey’, those who need more support should talk to their GP or pharmacist about other methods.

Even if you are taking medicine for high blood pressure, lifestyle changes are still important.

Next time you visit your doctor or pharmacist, talk about what you need to do during the holiday season to stay healthy.

For a fully copy of the article visit [www.australianprescriber.com](http://www.australianprescriber.com).

**ENDS**

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For independent information on prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines, consumers can call **Medicines Line** on **1300 888 763** to talk to a pharmacist between 9am and 6pm Monday to Friday, Eastern Standard Time (EST) for the cost of a local call (mobile calls may cost more).

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