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## **Blood pressure: how low to go?**

High blood pressure increases the risk of dying of cardiovascular disease, but lowering blood pressure too far may not always be beneficial. "When it comes to lowering blood pressure, one size rarely fits all", says Dr Suzanne Hill from the Faculty of Health at the University of Newcastle, in the latest issue of *Australian Prescriber*.

"There are many effective treatments for high blood pressure, but we need to know what the best target level for treatment is", said Dr Hill. "We are not certain that a lower target for blood pressure will improve survival in all patients.

"Doctors have to decide at what level the lowering of blood pressure in a patient causes more harm than good."

Dr Hill advised, "A single target blood pressure for all patient groups is clearly not justified. Determining the optimal blood pressure levels for patients depends on their general health. An important consideration is the presence of other risk factors such as diabetes. Patients with diabetes may be more likely to benefit from having a low blood pressure".

In the same issue of *Australian Prescriber* Dr Bill Lyndon examines withdrawal of useful drugs from the market. Professor Margaret Burgess and Dr Rosemary Lester write about meningococcal vaccines.

For the complete article visit the *Australian Prescriber* web site *Australian Prescriber*, an independent review journal providing critical commentary on therapeutic topics for health professionals, is published by the National Prescribing Service (NPS). The NPS is an independent Australian organisation for Quality Use of Medicines. For further information about the NPS visit the web site [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)

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**For further information or expert commentary about this article please contact Miriam Fletcher at NPS by telephone on (02) 9699 4499 or 0417 422 420 or by email at [mfletcher@nps.org.au](mailto:mfletcher@nps.org.au).**

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