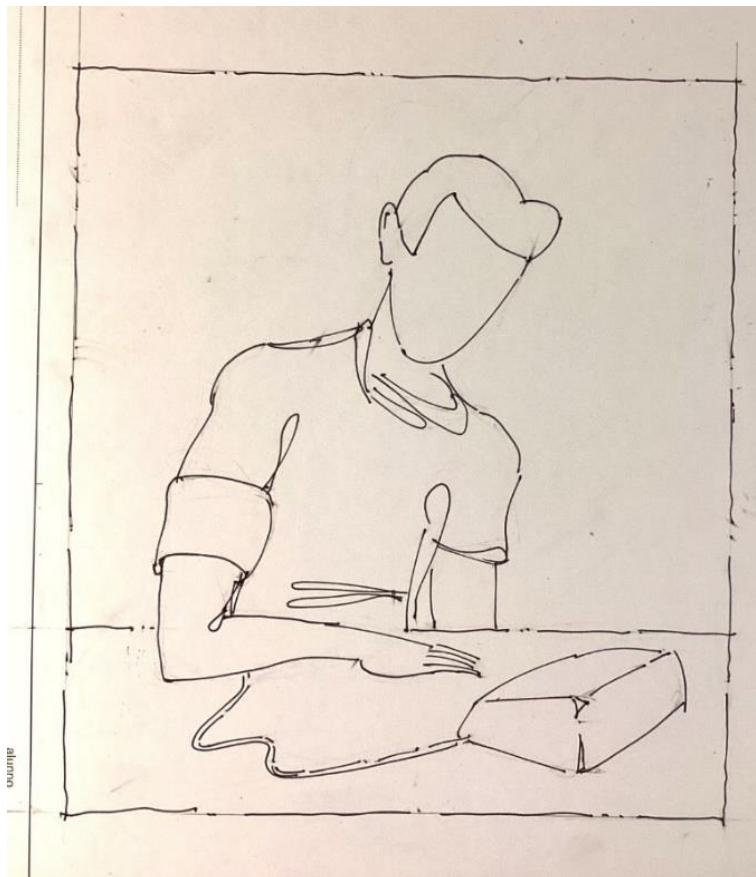


## HYPERTENSION: IF YOU KNOW IT, YOU CAN AVOID IT OR AT LEAST CONTROL IT WELL!

This health problem is truly widespread, both in our country and globally; according to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are over 1.5 billion hypertensive people, but precise numbers are difficult to obtain. Many people are unaware of their high blood pressure simply because they don't measure it making, in this way, statistics always underestimated. Sometimes hypertension is accompanied by symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, ringing in the ears, or nosebleeds, but more often there are no symptoms at all. That is why, in medical literature, hypertension is also called 'the silent killer': you see the havoc it causes: stroke, heart attack, atrial fibrillation, etc., before even knowing you suffer from it... In the past, it was believed that the increase of blood pressure with age was natural and not a cause for concern. Unfortunately, this is not true, and today WHO tells us that at any age, we should keep our blood pressure levels below 140 mmHg (systolic pressure) and 90 mmHg (diastolic pressure) <sup>1</sup>

*FIG. 1 DIGITAL SPHYGMOMANOMETER*

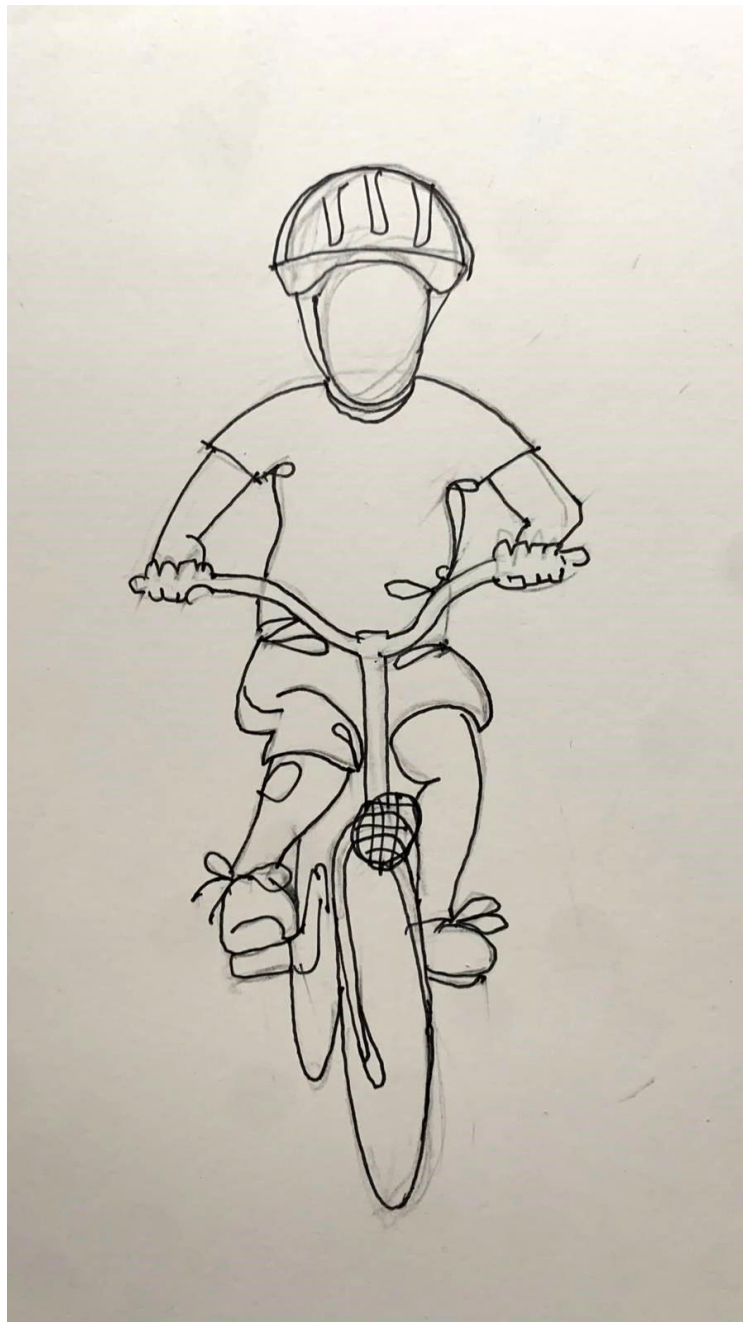


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<sup>1</sup> Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg) and is expressed with two numbers separated by a slash: Systolic pressure: the higher value indicates the maximum pressure when the heart contracts (systole); diastolic pressure: the lower value indicates the minimum pressure between heart contractions, when the heart relaxes (diastole).

Today, a new opportunity for an easier detection and a better control of hypertension is the availability of digital sphygmomanometers for self-measurement (fig. 1). Monitoring blood pressure through self-measurement is feasible: reliable digital sphygmomanometers are now available worldwide at affordable prices. Self-measurement also eliminates the problem of the 'white coat effect,' an abnormal increase in blood pressure values when measured by a healthcare professional.

*FIG. 2 EXERCISE , EXERCISE!*



Therefore, we must:

- Regularly monitor blood pressure!
- If it is high, we have to consult a doctor to modify our lifestyle and, if necessary, to start treatment, too. If possible, we have to measure our blood pressure at different times and days to keep a pressure diary to be shown to our doctor (health professional).
- If we are already taking medication, we have to make sure that blood pressure values are always under control. In addition:
- Quit smoking
- Exercise (fig. 2)
- Lose weight

All these actions reduce blood pressure!

Due to the relevance of the hypertension as health risk factor, WHO organises the World Hypertension Day in May. It started in 2005 and its aim is to raise awareness about this silent killer and to catalyze global action to fight it. The motto for 2024 was 'Measure your blood pressure accurately, control it, live longer '.

**True or False 1: We must reduce salt.. True**

There is a strong evidence of a causal relationship between salt intake and increased blood pressure. Compelling scientific data shows that reducing salt lowers blood pressure in both hypertensive and normotensive individuals. Lower consumption is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases.



*True or False 2: Alcohol is a vasodilator, it lowers blood pressure. **False***

Current knowledge indicates that an excessive alcohol consumption not only does not lower blood pressure but, on the contrary, it significantly increases the risk of hypertension, depending on the amount consumed.



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Illustrations by Roberto Braga, images of salt and alcohol  
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