

sure became widespread in the same period in large part as a result of these investigations.

Elevated levels were initially defined as 140/100 or greater, based upon a range of normal obtained by measuring the blood pressure on large numbers of adult Americans. What were once considered acceptable levels of blood pressure have been redefined as elevated levels in recent years. Today, the desirable level is considered 120/80 or lower. These changing levels are justified by follow-up data from a large number of individuals that demonstrates that even levels of blood pressure only slightly above 120/80 are associated with increased risk of stroke and heart disease.

The fluctuating levels of blood pressure often make it difficult to establish an individual's average level. Electronic monitoring of blood pressure over a 24-hour period has become a feasible and acceptable gold standard for establishing an individual's average level. Early detection and successful treatments have been shown to effectively reduce the consequences of high blood pressure. Weight loss and salt restriction are often prescribed initially, with subsequent introduction of one or more drugs. Most, if not all,