**Know, Record, Share**

**A guide to recording your blood pressure at home**

High blood pressure is the biggest known cause of disability and premature death in the UK through stroke, heart attack and heart disease. One in three adults in the UK has high blood pressure and every day 350 people have a preventable stroke or heart attack caused by the condition.

As a patient at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert practice name), you have been selected to take part in the Home Blood Pressure Monitoring programme as a raised blood pressure reading has been noted when you recently attended a GP practice or hospital. This will last approximately 1-2 weeks, and in most cases, you can borrow a blood pressure monitor from the practice if you do not already have one (you can also buy your own at a relatively small cost). At the end of the process, you can return the monitor to your practice at your convenience by simply handing it over to the reception desk. Please contact your local GP practice if you have any questions.

**Why measure your blood pressure at home?**

Your doctor or nurse will want to measure your blood pressure regularly. This is to make sure that medicines or lifestyle changes are helping to bring your blood pressure down. However, you may also want to measure your blood pressure yourself at home. Home monitoring does not have to be complicated or inconvenient. It can be very useful, for several reasons:

* To give a picture of what your blood pressure is like as you go about your daily life.
* To see if your blood pressure is higher in the clinic than it is at home.
* To see for yourself how your treatment is working for you i.e., are lifestyle changes or medication having any effect on your blood pressure.
* To alert you/your GP to unexpected changes in your readings, helping them to make changes to or adjust your medication.
* To help identify white coat hypertension - where the pressure is markedly higher due to anxiety about seeing a doctor.
* To help pick out the white coat effect - where the thought of a doctor or nurse measuring your blood pressure, even though you know you have raised blood pressure and may even be on treatment, will still raise it even higher.

**How to measure your blood pressure**

*There are a few simple steps that you can follow to be sure that you get an accurate measurement. The BP monitor is only effective if your pulse is regular which your nurse/doctor would usually be checking before loaning the monitor to you. You can also check your pulse by following this link* <https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/tests/checking-your-pulse>. *If unsure or your pulse feels irregular please ring 111 or get in touch with your GP.*

**Before you take your reading:**

1. Many things can make your blood pressure rise for a short time. Make sure you do not need to use the toilet, and that you have not just eaten a big meal. Do not measure your blood pressure within 30 minutes of drinking caffeine or smoking, or immediately after exercise or drinking alcohol.
2. Wear loose-fitting clothes like a short-sleeved t-shirt so that you can push your sleeve up comfortably.
3. Always use the same arm for readings, as each arm will give you a slightly different reading. If possible, use the arm that your doctor or nurse uses when measuring your blood pressure.
4. Before you take your readings, rest for a few minutes. You should be sitting down in a quiet place, preferably at a desk or table, with your arm resting, palm up, on a firm surface and your feet flat on the floor.
5. Make sure your arm is supported and that the cuff around your arm is at the same level as your heart. You may need to support your arm with a cushion to be sure it is at the correct height. Your arm should be relaxed, not tensed.

**Taking your reading:**

1. Ensure your pulse is regular. Please visit the British Heart Foundation website on the following link <https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/tests/checking-your-pulse> to know how to check your pulse and find additional information. Your home BP monitor is only reliable if your pulse is regular. Please contact your GP surgery/111 if you think you have an irregular pulse urgently.
2. Put the cuff on following the instructions that come with your monitor.
3. Make sure you are relaxed and comfortable. If you are anxious or uncomfortable, this will make your blood pressure rise temporarily.
4. When you are taking your reading, keep still and silent. Moving and talking can affect your reading.
5. You need to check your blood pressure at 8AM and 8PM for the next one or two weeks as advised by your GP surgery. The frequency and duration of monitoring will need to be agreed upon with your GP.
6. If your BP is over 175/115 or if you feel unwell or unsure please contact the GP surgery/111 urgently.

**Blood pressure targets for home blood pressure monitoring**

The measurements below are meant as a guide only. If, during a reading, your blood pressure is higher than the below target ranges, please rest for another 5 minutes then take the reading again. The average 7-day blood pressure reading targets are below.

**Blood pressure target guidance (Your GP/nurse may agree on an individualised target for you)**

* Age more than 80: 145/85
* Age less than 80: 135/85

**After measuring your readings:**

Complete an e-consultation on the practice website with your readings for the attention of the health care assistant/nurse and return the monitor at your convenience to the practice front desk.

If this is not possible you can make an appointment with the health care assistant/nurse and take the recorded blood pressures form with you.

**Tips to better control your blood pressure**

* Undertake regular physical activity, aim for 30 mins per day for five days a week.
* Eat a healthy and balanced diet.
* Reduce excess consumption of caffeine-based drinks, limit to 1-2 cups maximum per day.
* Keep salt to a minimum, an average of no more than 5 grams a day (one small teaspoon).
* Limit alcohol to less than 14 units a week.
* Avoid smoking.
* Visit <https://patient.info/heart-health/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/lifestyle> for further information, or speak to your practice nurse.

**Returning your blood pressure monitoring equipment**

Your equipment return date will have been agreed upon with your clinician. This varies on an individual basis and the purpose of monitoring.

Equipment must be cleaned before returning following the guidance below:

* Use a soft dry cloth or a soft cloth moistened with mild (neutral) detergent to clean your monitor and arm cuff, and then wipe with a dry cloth.
* Do not use any abrasive or volatile cleaners.
* Do not wash or immerse your monitor, arm cuff or other components in water.
* Do not use gasoline, thinners, or similar solvents to clean your monitor, arm cuff or other components.

Once the equipment is cleaned, you can return the equipment at the front desk if you are filling in an e-consult. Alternatively, you can leave it with your nurse if you have a follow-up appointment.

*The information contained in this letter has been adapted with thanks to Blood Pressure UK, British Heart Foundation and Heart Research UK. Further information can be found on their respective websites.*