

Home Blood Pressure Monitoring

(You cannot do this if you have Atrial Fibrillation)

What is home blood pressure monitoring?

Home blood pressure monitoring is when you measure your own blood pressure at home using a blood pressure monitor.

What are the benefits of monitoring my blood pressure at home?

- Often more accurate than clinic readings
- During COVID pandemic reduces risk of exposure to COVID 19 from health care professionals or other patients at your GP practice
- Allows you to check that your blood pressure is well controlled
- To diagnose hypertension (high blood pressure)
- To monitor known hypertension
- Help to see how the medication you are taking is working properly
- Good blood pressure control reduces your risk of suffering from severe COVID, requiring complications or having complications related to COVID

Why is this helpful/important during the COVID 19 pandemic?

During the COVID pandemic we are aiming to do as many annual reviews and monitoring remotely if possible. Doing home blood pressure monitoring will allow you to have your hypertension annual review fully remotely without any face to face contact with your GP practice.

Increasingly it is becoming apparent that if you have poorly controlled hypertension (raised blood pressure) you are more likely to suffer from severe COVID, require hospitalization with COVID and suffer from complications from COVID. Therefore it is important to take your hypertension medications as prescribed and consider intermittently checking your blood pressure.

Is home blood pressure monitoring suitable for everyone with hypertension?

Home blood pressure monitoring is suitable for most people with Hypertension, unless you have atrial fibrillation (AF).

- If you are unsure if you have AF, please contact your GP/practice nurse to clarify.
- If you have AF and would like to monitor your blood pressure, please contact your GP/practice nurse to arrange a routine telephone consultation to discuss your options.

How do I get a blood pressure monitor for home?

- Purchase your own (usually cost about £20-£30)
See below for further details

What type of monitor should I use to take my blood pressure at home?

- Automatic upper arm monitor: You should choose an automatic blood pressure monitor (as these are the easiest to use) that measures your blood pressure at your upper arm. Monitors that measure your blood pressure at your finger or wrist should be avoided as they do not always provide accurate readings.
- Clinically validated: You should choose a monitor that has been 'clinically validated'. This means that it has been through a series of tests and has been shown to give accurate readings. A list of clinically validated monitors is available on the Blood Pressure UK website (www.bloodpressureuk.org) and (www.bhsoc.org).
- Correct cuff size: An upper arm monitor uses a cuff that you wrap around your arm. Cuffs come in different sizes and, to get accurate readings, it is important that you use the cuff that is the right size for you. Some monitors may already come with a standard sized cuff, so you may need to order a different one if this is too big or small (the instructions that come with your monitor will provide information about how you should decide what size of cuff you need to use). – add table of cuff size
- Calibrated: To ensure that a monitor continues to produce accurate results, it will need to be re-calibrated (tested and adjusted to ensure that it is still accurate) every year or so. The instructions that come with your monitor will provide information about precisely how often the monitor should be re-calibrated and how this should be done. This is often a charge for this service. Alternatively you may decide to replace the monitor with a new one (many pharmacies have monitors available to buy).

How often should you monitor your blood pressure?

- Every 4-6 months
- When you are due your hypertension annual review
- When hypertension medication is stopped (ask GP for specific advice)
- When new hypertension medication is added (ask GP for specific advice)

How do I monitor blood pressure?

To get an accurate idea of your blood pressure you should monitor your blood pressure on two occasions each day for 7 consecutive days.

Each day you should take your blood pressure on two occasions: in the morning (between 6am and 12noon) and again in the evening (between 6pm and midnight). Try to take the readings at the same time every day. Each time you will need to take a minimum of two readings, leaving at least one minute between each. If the first two readings are very different, you should take 2 or 3 further readings. Then write down the lowest of the blood pressure readings.

It is important that you do not check your blood pressure too often or become stressed and worried about your readings, as this could in fact make your blood pressure higher.

My blood pressure readings are not always the same. Is this normal?

Blood pressure naturally rises and falls throughout the day, so it is completely normal for your blood pressure readings to vary slightly. If you get an unexpectedly high or low reading, you should not be alarmed. Continue to take your blood pressure as planned.

Do I need to write anything down?

Yes. You should keep a blood pressure diary, clearly documenting your blood pressure readings (even if your monitor has a memory function), as well as the date and time at which each reading was taken. The attached form can be used.

The numbers you write down should be the same as those that appear on the monitor screen: do not round the numbers up or down. This should also document anything that you think could have affected your readings such as feeling unwell or changes in your medication. You do not need to write down your pulse/heart rate.

What do I do with my readings/blood pressure diary?

Please give to your GP by:

Post to: Stewart Medical Centre, 15 Hartington Road, Buxton SK17 6JP

Put through the GP letterbox

Email to: admin.stewartmedical@nhs.net (NB this address is not to be used for queries, prescriptions or general communication with the Practice)

Your GP/Practice Nurse will then review your blood pressure readings and contact you if your readings require discussion or/and treatment.

If you would like to discuss your readings please wait at least 7 days after you sent your blood pressure diary to your GP, and then contact the practice (01298 22338) to arrange a GP/Practice Nurse telephone consultation to discuss your readings.