

## **Blood pressure**

Most of us know that we should be monitoring our blood pressure, yet many of us don't know why, what the readings mean and what may be abnormal. By gaining extra knowledge and understanding, we hope that it will allow you to feel more confident to manage your own health.

### **What is blood pressure?**

Blood pressure (BP) is the term used to describe the strength with which your blood pushes on the sides of your arteries as it's pumped around your body. Your blood pressure can be measured by a blood pressure machine.

When your blood pressure is checked, you will get given two readings ie 120/80. The top reading (Systolic) is the higher reading as it refers to the pressure against your arteries when your heart is contracting. The bottom reading (diastolic) is lower as it refers to the pressure when your heart is relaxed in between beats.

### **Who needs their BP checking?**

If you are aged 40 and over, it is now recommended that you should have your blood pressure checked once every 5 years. However, if we find that your BP is borderline or raised, you have an underlying health condition or are on medication that requires regular monitoring, then you may be asked to have your BP checked at a younger age or more frequently. Your GP surgery will be able to advise you of this.

### **My GP surgery has asked me to have my BP checked, why is this important?**

If you have high blood pressure, it can cause strain on your arteries and organs such as your kidneys and heart. This can lead to long term problems such as strokes, heart attacks and kidney damage.

If we can detect a problem with your blood pressure early, then we can provide advice with how to best manage it and how to prevent long term problems. This doesn't have to be medication, as often changes to lifestyle can make big differences. Treatment doesn't always have to be long term either, as

if you are able to make lifestyle changes, then your blood pressure may return to normal which may mean you can stop taking your medication.

### **How can I check my blood pressure?**

- **Home blood pressure readings – why is my GP surgery asking me to do these instead of having my BP readings done at the surgery?**

We know that home BP readings are often much more accurate than having your blood pressure checked at your GP surgery. This is because you are more likely to be relaxed at home. Evidence also shows that to obtain an accurate representation of your BP, a week of home blood pressure readings are required.

You may be asked to have your BP checked because you are aged 40 or over or as part of your chronic disease monitoring.

What can I do?

- 1) Purchase a blood pressure machine that measures your blood pressure on the arm (do not purchase a wrist monitor)
  - 2) Make sure that the cuff you have is the right size. Ask the pharmacist or nurse if you are not sure. (If your cuff is the wrong size, the readings will not be accurate)
  - 3) If you are asked to check your blood pressure at home, please perform a week of home blood pressure readings. You can download a form from [here](#) if you need to.
  - 4) Please follow the instructions on the form carefully and document your 2<sup>nd</sup> readings as the form suggests.
  - 5) Once you have completed your week of readings you can either email them to the surgery or drop them in to us to review.
  - 6) If you are taking your BP as part of your chronic disease review you can then discuss the readings with the nurse or Dr as part of the review. If it was taken for a 5 yearly health check then we will get in touch with you if we need to.
- **24hr blood pressure** – sometimes we need a more accurate reading of your blood pressure and so we may ask you to have a 24hr BP cuff fitted.

This is the same as having your BP checked normally but the cuff will stay on for 24hrs and then be removed.

- **Practice nurse:** If you do not wish to purchase a home BP machine or can't afford one, you can book an appointment for the nurse to check it or use the machine in the waiting room.
- **Pharmacy** – Several pharmacies now offer BP checking so please ask.

### **What should my blood pressure be?**

As a general guide:

**Normal blood pressure** is considered to be between 90/60 & 120/80

**High blood pressure** is considered to be 140/90 or over

**Low blood pressure** is considered to be 90/60 or lower

If you have a chronic health condition such as Diabetes then your GP or nurse may have a lower BP target to aim for – please ask them what your BP should be.

If you are aged 80 or over, your GP or nurse may allow slightly higher targets for your BP, again please ask.

### **When do I need to speak to my GP or nurse?**

If your blood pressure readings are measuring consistently over 180/100 then please contact your surgery to discuss this urgently.

If it is still higher than the recommended target above but is lower than 180/100 then please make a routine appointment with your nurse or GP to discuss. To help us, please make sure you provide us with a week of your home readings.

If your blood pressure is low for you and you are feeling unwell such as light headed or you have experienced falls or collapses, then please contact the surgery to discuss this further.

## Home Blood Pressure readings

Date of BP readings:

Name:

Date of Birth

Telephone number:

### How to take my Blood pressure

- Please take your BP twice daily – The morning and in the evening is usually the best times to do this
- You can take your BP from either arm
- Rest for 5 minutes before you begin with your legs uncrossed and make sure you are sat in a seated position.
- Two consecutive readings are taken each time. Take your first BP reading and then discard it. Wait for at least a minute and then take a 2<sup>nd</sup> reading. It is the **2<sup>nd</sup> reading** that you record in the box below.
- Repeat this again in the evening.
- You will need to take your BP readings for a week at a time ie 14 readings

	<b>Date</b>	<b>AM Reading</b>	<b>PM Reading</b>
<b>Example</b>	24/08/20	120/86	132/88
<b>Day 1</b>			
<b>Day 2</b>			
<b>Day 3</b>			
<b>Day 4</b>			
<b>Day 5</b>			
<b>Day 6</b>			
<b>Day 7</b>			
Average BP reading	For surgery use		

Current weight \_\_\_\_\_

Waist measurement \_\_\_\_\_ cm