

## Maternity

# Self-monitoring of blood pressure during pregnancy

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet explains how to take your blood pressure at home and what to do once you have taken your blood pressure.

Your blood pressure is a measurement of the force required for your heart to pump blood around your body. You will have been provided with a blood pressure monitor known to give accurate blood pressure readings in pregnancy. Further information about blood pressure in pregnancy and suitable monitors can be found at

- [Action on Pre-eclampsia - Supporting families affected by Pre-eclampsia \(action-on-pre-eclampsia.org.uk\)](http://action-on-pre-eclampsia.org.uk)

Please speak to your midwife or a doctor if you have any further questions or concerns.

### How often will I need to take my blood pressure?

Your midwife or doctor will advise you on how often you should check your blood pressure. Usually, it will be as follows;

- on the morning of a virtual clinic appointment (a phone or video appointment)
- once a week if you are at risk of developing high blood pressure in pregnancy
- up to once a day if you already have high blood pressure in pregnancy

### How do I take my blood pressure?

- Always measure your blood pressure using the same arm (normally the left arm).
- Keep your arms bare or wear loose clothing with sleeves that roll up easily and do not feel tight when rolled up.
- Sit on a chair with your back supported and both feet flat on the floor. Rest for five minutes before beginning to take your blood pressure.
- Slip the cuff onto your upper arm so that the air tube points towards your wrist.
- Adjust the bottom edge of the cuff so that it is about 2cm above the inside of your elbow joint.
- Tighten the cuff around your arm and secure it using the velcro.
- Rest your arm on a table or across your lap with your hand slightly open and your palm facing upward.
- Once the machine is set up and you have the cuff in the correct position, and you are ready to start, press the 'start' button on the front of the machine to take a reading.
- Try to relax. Do not move your arm muscles and do not talk until the measurement is completed.
- Measure your blood pressure twice (at least one minute apart).

- Write down the second blood pressure reading (systolic (SYS) then diastolic (DIA)) on your phone or in your maternity notes.

If you have any difficulties, or if you have any symptoms of severe blood pressure (severe headache, swelling of face/fingers/ constant upper abdominal pain) please contact the maternity unit helpline for more information on 0203 312 6135.

- You can watch a video from the British Heart Foundation showing how to measure your blood pressure here: [British Heart Foundation - How to measure your own blood pressure](#)

## Record your blood pressure readings

Each time you measure your blood pressure you will get two readings:

- The top number (systolic, usually called SYS for short) measures the pressure when your heart beats and pumps blood around your body.
- The bottom number (diastolic, usually called DIA for short) measures the pressure when your heart is resting in between beats.

Your pulse (the rate your heart is beating) may also be displayed (usually called PUL).

## What is a normal reading?

Blood pressure readings vary between people and the table below can be used as a guide of when to contact health professionals or attend the maternity unit. Please bring your readings to all of your antenatal clinic appointments for the healthcare professionals to review.

Blood pressure reading	What does this mean?	Action
SYS 150 or more OR DIA 100 or more	High blood pressure	Sit quietly for five minutes and then take another blood pressure reading. If it remains high, please contact the maternity unit within four hours and check your blood pressure daily.
SYS 140-149 OR DIA 90-99	Raised blood pressure	Sit quietly for five minutes and then take another reading. If it remains raised, please contact the maternity unit within 24 hours and check your blood pressure daily.
SYS 135-139 OR DIA 85-89	Blood pressure is high-normal	Sit quietly for five minutes and then take another blood pressure reading. If it remains in the 'high normal' range, check your blood pressure daily.
SYS 110-134 OR DIA 70-84	Normal blood pressure	Continue checking your blood pressure at your current rate.
SYS 109 or less OR DIA 69 or less	Low-normal blood pressure	If you are <u>not</u> taking blood pressure medication and feel well – then continue to check BP as you have been advised.




## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:  
 Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary’s Hospital, Praed Street  
 London W2 1NY  
 Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net) Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: [imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

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