

Patient information factsheet

Self-monitoring of blood pressure during pregnancy

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about self-monitoring your blood pressure during your pregnancy and after your baby is born. It explains how to take your blood pressure at home using an upper arm monitor and what to do once you have taken your blood pressure. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your midwife or obstetrician (doctor who specialises in the care of pregnant women).

How often will I need to take my blood pressure?

We may ask you to take your blood pressure:

- on the morning of your clinic appointment (if you have normal blood pressure)
- once a week (if you are at higher risk of getting high blood pressure)
- one to three times a week (if you have high blood pressure)

Please check with your midwife or obstetrician about how often you should monitor your blood pressure.

How do I take my blood pressure?

- Always measure your blood pressure using the same arm (normally the left arm).
- Wear loose clothing with sleeves that roll up easily and do not feel tight when rolled up, as you will need to fit the cuff onto your bare arm. Alternatively you can take your arm out of your clothing.
- 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 arm so that the air tube points towards your wrist. The yellow line on the cuff should be over the inside of your elbow.
- 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 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). You can send it by text or smartphone app if you are using one of these systems.

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What should I do once I have taken my blood pressure?

Level	Blood pressure	Action
High	SYS 150 or more or DIA 100 or more	<p>Your blood pressure is high. Sit quietly for five minutes and then take your blood pressure again. Write down the reading.</p> <p>If the reading is still raised, contact the maternity day assessment unit (MDAU) on 023 8120 4463 for advice. Do not wait more than four hours before making this phone call. You may need an appointment to be seen today.</p> <p>If you have headaches or abdominal pain, please phone MDAU straight away. You should not wait longer than an hour before you phone MDAU.</p>
Raised	SYS 140 to 149 or DIA 90 to 99	<p>Your blood pressure is raised. Sit quietly for five minutes and then take your blood pressure again. Write down the reading.</p> <p>If the reading is still raised, contact the maternity day assessment unit (MDAU) on 023 8120 4463 for advice within 24 hours.</p> <p>If you have headaches or abdominal pain, please phone MDAU straight away. You should not wait longer than an hour before you phone MDAU. You may need an appointment to be seen today.</p>
Normal	SYS 110 to 139 and DIA 70 to 89	<p>Your blood pressure is normal.</p> <p>Continue monitoring your blood pressure according to the plan agreed by your midwife or obstetrician.</p>
Low	SYS 109 or less and DIA 69 or less	<p>If you are not taking blood pressure medication: Your blood pressure is normal. If you are feeling well, this blood pressure reading does not need any further action.</p> <p>If you are taking blood pressure medication: Your blood pressure is low. Take your blood pressure again in 30 minutes.</p> <p>If the reading is still low, contact the maternity day assessment unit (MDAU) on 023 8120 4463 for advice within 24 hours.</p> <p>If you feel unwell (dizzy or faint), please contact MDAU within four hours. You may need to reduce or stop your blood pressure treatment.</p>

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Record your blood pressure readings

Your blood pressure is a measurement of the force required for your heart to pump blood around your body. 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).

Date and time	How many weeks pregnant?	Blood pressure reading	Any symptoms (headache, abdominal pain, swollen face or hands)? (Yes or no)	Notes

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Maternity day assessment unit
Telephone: **023 8120 4463**

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**

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