

Hypertension

How early detection prevents serious health risks



Imaan Pharmacy
Werneth, Oldham

Mr Stephens, a 47-year-old husband and father of three, attended Imaan Pharmacy, where he was offered a routine blood pressure check as part of a pharmacy-led blood pressure monitoring service.

- He had no prior diagnosis of hypertension and was not taking any regular cardiovascular medication.
- An initial clinic **blood pressure reading taken in the pharmacy was significantly elevated** and above the accepted threshold for normal blood pressure.
- As per NICE guidance, Mr Stephens was advised that a single elevated reading was not sufficient for diagnosis and was therefore **offered ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM) to confirm whether sustained hypertension was present**.
- Mr Stephens agreed and underwent **16-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM)**. The results demonstrated persistently raised blood pressure readings throughout the monitoring period, confirming a diagnosis of hypertension. Due to these findings, he was appropriately **referred to his GP** with the ABPM report.
- Following GP assessment, Mr Stephens was diagnosed with hypertension and commenced on an **antihypertensive medication**, alongside lifestyle advice. This early identification allowed timely medical intervention.

Risks Associated with Untreated High Blood Pressure

Sustained high blood pressure significantly **increases the risk** of developing **several serious long-term conditions**, including:

- **Cardiovascular disease**, such as coronary heart disease and heart attacks, due to increased strain on the heart and blood vessels

- **Stroke and transient ischaemic attacks (TIAs)**, as high blood pressure damages cerebral blood vessels and increases the likelihood of clot formation or vessel rupture
- **Chronic kidney disease**, caused by damage to the small blood vessels in the kidneys
- **Heart failure**, resulting from prolonged increased workload on the heart muscle
- **Vision loss**, due to damage to retinal blood vessels (hypertensive retinopathy)
- **Vascular dementia**, linked to reduced blood flow and repeated small vessel damage in the brain

Hypertension is often asymptomatic, meaning individuals like Mr Stephens may be unaware of the condition until complications arise.

Impact of Early Detection and Treatment

By identifying Mr Stephens' raised blood pressure at an early stage and confirming the diagnosis through ABPM, **the pharmacy intervention significantly reduced his long-term health risks**. Initiation of antihypertensive therapy has been shown to:

- Lower the risk of stroke and heart attack
- Reduce progression to kidney disease
- Decrease overall cardiovascular mortality
- Improve long-term quality of life



This case highlights the important role of community pharmacy services in **early detection, referral, and prevention of long-term complications**, supporting improved patient outcomes and reducing pressure on secondary care services.