

Maximising the success of the Hypertension Case Finding Service

NHS Hypertension Case-Finding Service

The NHS Community Pharmacy Hypertension Case-Finding Service plays a vital role in the early detection and management of hypertension, a leading risk factor for cardiovascular disease (CVD). The service provides opportunistic blood pressure (BP) checks to support early diagnosis and management. Community pharmacies are uniquely positioned to identify individuals with elevated blood pressure readings and facilitate timely interventions. It is estimated that around 30% of clinic BP checks will require further monitoring using an ABPM.

Protocol following elevated BP readings

When a patient has a clinic blood pressure reading of 140/90 mmHg or higher but less than 180/120 mmHg, the following steps must be followed:

- **Offer Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring (ABPM):** This is NHS-recommended way to confirm a hypertension diagnosis which allows a GP to initiate treatment. It measures blood pressure at different times, giving a more accurate picture. Every effort should be made to encourage patients to wear the ABPM device for as long as possible to obtain wake and sleep time readings
- **Act quickly:** Try to offer ABPM the same day. If that's not possible, arrange it as soon as you can at a time convenient for the patient
- **Alternative measures:** If a patient is unable to tolerate ABPM, they should be referred to their GP for further assessment

ABPM Key points

- **ABPM is a mandatory part of the service:** Provision of ABPM is not optional. Pharmacies must have sufficient ABPM devices and appropriately trained staff to provide ABPM when clinically indicated. Failure to do so may result in non-compliance with the service specification and could affect patient outcomes
- **NHSBSA post-payment verification:** Current NHSBSA activity includes checking that there is an appropriate balance between clinic BP checks and ABPM provision, reinforcing the expectation that ABPM is offered when indicated
- **Professional responsibilities:** Timely access to ABPM also supports compliance with GPhC standards, including providing person-centred care, exercising professional judgement and acting in the patient's best interests

- **Do not repeat clinic BP readings:** Where a clinic BP measurement has already been undertaken in another healthcare setting, it should not be repeated in the pharmacy. Record the reading provided or, if it was not included with the ABPM referral, note this in the clinical record
- **ABPM equipment temporarily unavailable:** If ABPM equipment is temporarily unavailable and the full service cannot be offered, temporarily remove the service from the pharmacy's NHS website profile via NHS Profile Manager
- **Patients who do not attend:** Following a missed ABPM appointment, make at least two attempts on separate occasions to rearrange within 7 days. If the patient has still not attended, notify their general practice on or after day 7

How to have patient centred conversations

Why ABPM Is recommended

Say something like:

"Your blood pressure reading today was higher than normal. That doesn't always mean there's a problem — sometimes it's just up temporarily, especially in a clinical setting."

"To be sure, we recommend something called Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring, or ABPM. It's a small monitor you wear during the day, and it checks your blood pressure at regular intervals while you go about your normal day."

Key points

- ABPM gives a more accurate picture of your blood pressure over the whole day
- It helps us tell the difference between a temporary spike and true high blood pressure
- It could prevent you from being misdiagnosed or put on medication unnecessarily
- It's the gold standard test used by the NHS for confirming a diagnosis

If the patient refuses or is hesitant

"I feel fine — I don't think I need it."

That makes sense — high blood pressure often doesn't cause symptoms. That's why it's referred to as the 'silent killer'. ABPM helps us spot any hidden risks before they cause harm.

"I don't want to wear something all day."

The monitor comes with a cuff that fits around your upper arm. The cuff is connected to a small monitor that you wear on a belt or strap. Most people get used to it quickly — it only takes a reading every 30 minutes, you wear it for just one day, the results are more accurate if we can get some night time readings.

"I'm too busy to come back."

We'll work with your schedule to make it easy — it's a quick visit to fit the monitor and one more to return it. In return, we get vital information that could protect you.

"It's probably just stress or a one-off."

You could be right — and ABPM is exactly how we check that. It avoids jumping to conclusions and helps us make the best decision for your health.

Reminder for Pharmacy Teams:

When talking to patients about ABPM, remember to:

- Be calm, reassuring, and non-judgmental
- Explain how it helps prevent future problems
- Keep it simple – use everyday language
- Offer appointments that work for the patient

Accurate records and sharing the ABPM report

- Accurately record all stages of the Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring (ABPM) process in PharmOutcomes (PO) or an approved alternative IT solution
- Always aim to attach or send the ABPM report via your IT solution when completing the follow-up
- Send at the time of the appointment as this supports GPs in making prompt and informed clinical decisions

Top Tips for Pharmacy Teams – Maximising ABPM success

- Keep it person-centred: Frame the process in terms of what benefits the patient e.g. "This helps your GP avoid guessing and means fewer delays or repeat visits."
- Plan ahead for follow-ups: Book the return/follow-up appointment at the same time you issue the ABPM device – it saves time and reduces no-shows
- Keep devices in use: Track device return dates carefully. Have a system in place to follow up on late returns so the ABPM equipment remains available for others
- Calibrate and Check Devices Regularly in line with manufacturers requirements. Routine checks on ABPM devices prevent technical errors and ensure reliable results. Keep a maintenance log if possible

Supporting information

- [Service Specification](#)
- [NICE Guidance](#)
- [CPE Briefing 016/26: Changes to the Hypertension Case-Finding Service specification](#)