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Blood Pressure

keeping it in check



The importance of blood pressure

High blood pressure (hypertension) is one of the biggest risk factors in heart disease, stroke and many other health problems. It's often called the 'silent killer' because it has no real symptoms. If you have hypertension it needs to be diagnosed, monitored and treated.

Blood pressure testing is most effective when carried out continuously over a 24-hour period (Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring - ABPM).

Why? Because a single reading may not be enough to give an accurate picture. Blood pressure goes up and down and follows a natural pattern throughout the day. It usually falls in the evening, is at its lowest during sleep and starts to rise in the early hours just before you wake. It's also higher when you're active, excited or nervous, and for many people the stress of a visit to the doctor may increase it, a phenomenon known as the 'white coat effect'.

People whose blood pressure surges excessively in the morning or doesn't fall in the evening may be at a higher risk of stroke, heart failure and other cardiac problems.

If you have high blood pressure it means:

- Your heart has to work harder and the arteries and blood vessels are put under strain
- The force of the blood flow creates small tears in the artery walls. The resulting scar tissue provides a lodging place for LDL cholesterol and other fatty substances that build up, creating plaque which narrows the arteries and restricts blood flow.
- Narrowing of the arteries restricts blood and oxygen flow to your organs which can lead to brain, eye and kidney damage whilst blood clots (bits of plaque that dislodge from the artery) can potentially lead to a heart attack or stroke.
- As you age, your arteries naturally harden and become less elastic over time. This happens to everyone. High blood pressure speeds up the process.
- The heart muscle becomes thicker and stiffer because it has to work harder which puts you at risk of an enlarged heart.

24hr Blood Pressure Monitoring Service

Your doctor may refer you for 24hr ABPM if you have:

- had higher blood pressure readings during clinic visits or at home
- symptoms such as falls, dizziness, headaches
- diagnosed hypertension (high blood pressure)
- a medical condition which may impact on or be impacted by blood pressure

How it works

Once your doctor has given you a referral, it's just a matter of making an appointment to be fitted with a monitor.

A lightweight electronic device is worn to measure and record the pattern of your blood pressure and your heart rate at regular intervals as you go about your routine activities throughout the day and night. Readings are automatically taken every half hour during the day and every hour overnight.

You are asked to record your activities (including sleep), symptoms and any medications in a diary as this can provide your doctor with valuable information about your blood pressure and may help inform any potential treatment.

The device is removed after 24 hours. The data is then reviewed and a detailed report sent to your doctor.



How to make an appointment

Blood pressure monitors are fitted by appointment only.

Cardiology services are provided at selected centres across Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. For the location and telephone number of your nearest collection centre, please visit our website at:

www.snp.com.au/our-locations/collection-centre-locations/

and select 'Ambulatory blood pressure (ABP) monitor centres' from the left hand menu, or telephone Patient Services Support on (07) 3377 8747 or 1300 732 030.

Preparation

To prepare for your ABP appointment please:

- Shower before your appointment as you cannot shower again until the monitor is removed.
- Wear loose 2 piece clothing with short sleeves for ease of fitting and removal of the monitor.
- Bring a list of your medications.

Duration

Up to 40 minutes to attach and 15 minutes to detach.

Your results

A comprehensive report will be sent to your doctor within 1-2 working days.

Fees

There is no Medicare rebate available for this service. Upfront payment for this test will be required at the time of the device fitting.

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