

Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM) is the clinically preferred method for diagnosing hypertension. If your pharmacy provides the Hypertension Case-Finding Service, it is a requirement that where a patient's reading indicates the need for ABPM, that this is offered in a timely manner, ideally within a few days of the initial clinic measurement.

You must have an ABPM device and trained staff to deliver this element of the service.

It is estimated that around 30% of clinic BP checks will require further monitoring using an ABPM.

Importance of ABPM Access

Accurate blood pressure measurement is crucial in ensuring the correct diagnosis of hypertension and the subsequent management of it. For pharmacies providing the Hypertension Case-Finding Service, the impact of an inaccurate BP reading can not only compromise patient safety but may also be felt in other parts of the healthcare system if patients are unnecessarily diverted to the GP practice. Where the patient's BP reading indicates a need for ABPM, this must be offered. **Provision of ABPM is not optional; it is a mandatory component of the service specification*.**

** The current focus for post-payment verification by the NHSBSA is checking that there is a balance between clinic check and ABPM provision.*

Who Should be Offered ABPM?

Patients who have a clinic BP pressure reading of:

- 140/90 mmHg or higher but less than 180/120 mmHg must be offered ABPM. 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.**

We know that patients are sometimes reluctant to have ABPM but discussing some of the key points below may help to make up their mind:

- 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.

Example Scripts for Patient Conversations

Why ABPM is recommended:

"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."

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, and you can take it off before going to bed".

- "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".

Tips for Pharmacy Teams – Maximising ABPM Success

- **Keep the language simple** when talking to patients. Frame the conversation in terms of the benefits for them of having ABPM e.g. *"this helps your GP avoid guessing and means fewer delays or repeat visits."*
- **Plan ahead** for ABPM follow-up appointments: 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.

See the CPE website for further information on the [Hypertension Case-Finding Service](#).

IMPORTANT REMINDER: ABPM Bundling Requirements

As part of [**"bundling" requirements**](#) to qualify for the fixed Pharmacy First monthly payment, pharmacies may be required to deliver at least one ABPM provision per month.