



Know your blood pressure

Organising your event

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The Know Your Blood Pressure campaign

We are the Stroke Association. We believe that stroke can and should be prevented. Stroke is devastating. There are approximately 152,000 strokes every year in the UK and yet far too many people don't understand it or ever think it'll happen to them. That's why we will do everything we can to prevent you and your family from having a stroke.

High blood pressure is the biggest risk factor for stroke, contributing to over 50% of all strokes. These strokes could be prevented if high blood pressure was controlled. Our Know Your Blood Pressure campaign helps people to understand the link between high blood pressure and stroke, other risk factors for stroke and what they can do to reduce their risk.

Since the campaign began we have tested the blood pressure of over 150,000 people. With your support, the Know Your Blood Pressure campaign is helping to prevent strokes and save lives.

These event guidelines contain all the information you need to organise your event and answer any questions you may have. If you need any further information you can visit **stroke.org.uk/kybp**, email **kybp@stroke.org.uk** or call us on **01527 908918**.

Freepost RSZL-SAUL-GRBK
Know Your Blood Pressure
Stroke Association
Life After Stroke Centre
Church Lane
Bromsgrove
B61 8RA

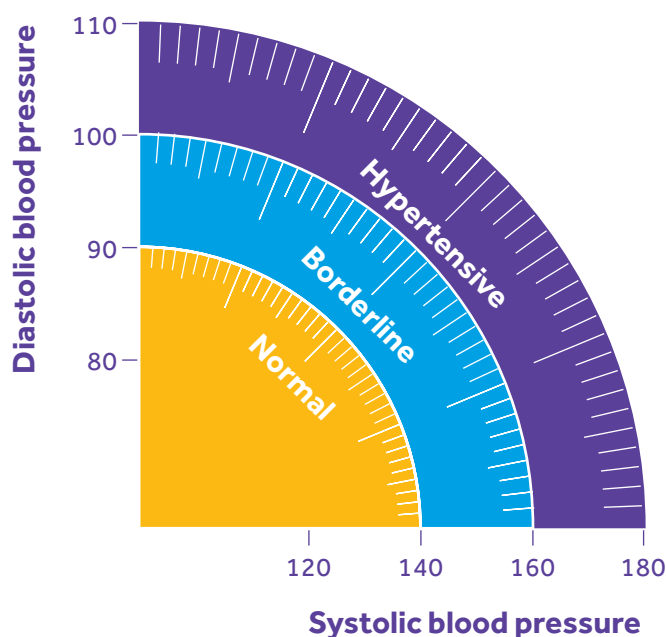
High blood pressure and stroke

What is blood pressure?

On average, your heart will beat around 70 to 80 times a minute and it is this pumping action which drives blood through your arteries and your brain. Blood pressure is a measure of the force with which the blood presses on the walls of the arteries as it is pumped around the body.

Blood pressure is measured with two readings, firstly when the heart beats (systolic pressure) and secondly when the heart relaxes (diastolic pressure). This is written as a fraction. Blood pressure is always higher when the heart beats than when it relaxes. Both pressures are measured in millimetres of mercury, written as 'mmHg'.

Optimal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mmHg. A normal adult blood pressure should be less than 140/90 mmHg. If your blood pressure is consistently above 140/90 mmHg (or 130/80 mmHg if you have diabetes) then you will be considered to have high blood pressure or hypertension, as it is sometimes known.



What causes high blood pressure?

A number of factors can influence blood pressure including:

- **age** – older people are more likely to develop high blood pressure
- **ethnic group** – high blood pressure is more common in people of certain ethnic groups, such as those of African-Caribbean or South Asian origin
- **family history** – high blood pressure can run in families
- **gender** – men are more likely than women to develop high blood pressure
- **lifestyle** – blood pressure can be raised by being overweight, drinking too much alcohol, smoking, eating too much salt and not taking regular exercise.

What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

High blood pressure often shows no symptoms. There is no way of knowing that you have high blood pressure apart from having it measured. Studies have shown that around four fifths of men and two thirds of women with high blood pressure are not being treated. Many people are unaware that they have it and routine blood pressure screening in the community is therefore very valuable for detecting it.

What is the link between high blood pressure and stroke?

A stroke happens when the blood supply to the brain is disrupted. High blood pressure puts a strain on blood vessels all over the body, including arteries to the brain. The pressure can damage the lining of an artery, allowing blood clots to form which may then block blood flow to the brain or cause blood vessels to burst, leading to bleeding in the brain.

When the blood supply is disrupted, a stroke can happen and parts of the brain can become damaged or destroyed. Some strokes are fatal while others can cause permanent or temporary paralysis or communication problems.

Stroke facts

- Strokes can happen to anyone, at any age, at any time.
- Each year there are approximately 152,000 strokes in the UK.
- Stroke is the fourth single largest cause of death in the UK and the largest cause of complex disability in the world.

Reducing high blood pressure – reducing risk of stroke

A raised blood pressure reading on three separate occasions is usually taken as confirmation of sustained high blood pressure. Lifestyle changes can bring blood pressure down to a normal level. These include stopping smoking, eating a healthy diet, drinking sensibly and taking regular exercise.

If lifestyle changes do not reduce blood pressure to within normal ranges and it is consistently above 140/90 mmHg, medication may be required.

Low blood pressure

Most people with low blood pressure, for example at 90/60 mmHg, are seen to have a reduced risk of stroke or heart attack. However, if someone has low blood pressure and also has symptoms of faintness when they stand up, they may have postural hypotension. If postural hypotension is suspected, the person should have their blood pressure checked when they are lying down and when they are standing up and should be referred to their GP. If people have any concerns about low blood pressure, please reassure them and refer them to their GP for further advice.

Recognising a stroke – the FAST test

The Face, Arm, Speech, Time (FAST) test can help you recognise the symptoms of a stroke



Facial weakness

Can the person smile?
Has their mouth or
eye drooped?



Arm weakness

Can the person raise
both arms?



Speech problems

Can the person
speak clearly and
understand what
you say?



Time

to call 999.

We want more people to be FAST aware, so they can spot the signs of stroke and treat it as a medical emergency by calling 999. Since the FAST campaign began, more than 24,000 people have got to hospital sooner, saving many lives. But, with your help, we can do even more.

Stroke kills around 50,000 people in the UK each year and is the largest cause of adult disability in the world. The first three hours are critical in limiting the impact on the brain. Demonstrate the FAST test to visitors on the day and encourage them to forward it on to their family and friends, so they can become FAST aware.

You can also order FAST materials to hand out to the public on the day.

Other risk factors for stroke - Atrial Fibrillation

Please note that screening for Atrial Fibrillation must only be undertaken at events by Ambulance Services.

What is Atrial Fibrillation?

Atrial Fibrillation (commonly known as AF) is the most common type of irregular heartbeat. Over 1 million people in the UK are living with the condition, and it's more common as you get older.

What are the links to stroke?

If you have an irregular heartbeat, your heart may not have a chance to relax and empty itself of blood properly before filling up again. As a result, the blood does not move quickly and smoothly, and can form clots inside the heart. If these clots travel in the bloodstream towards the brain, they could block the blood flow to your brain and cause a stroke or TIA.

AF increases your risk of stroke by up to **five times** and accounts for around 15% of all strokes. Recognising and receiving proper treatment for AF is important as strokes due to AF are often more severe, but importantly, are avoidable.

Recognising AF

The following symptoms could be a sign that you have AF; palpitations, breathlessness, chest discomfort, fatigue, no symptoms but an irregular pulse over one minute.

A quick way to test for AF is to check the heart rate from feeling the pulse in the wrist or neck. **A normal heart rate should be between 60 and 100 beats per minute.** You can advise visitors that they can check their own pulse quite easily.

An irregular heart rate is difficult to assess definitively with this method but anyone whose heart rate is persistently above 120 or below 40 beats per minute should see their doctor as soon as possible for further investigation and routine tests including an ECG (echocardiogram) for comprehensive diagnosis.

There are over
1,000,000
PEOPLE
with AF in the UK.

An illustration featuring two stylized human figures, a woman on the left and a man on the right, both rendered in a solid orange color. They are positioned on either side of the central text block, which is set against a white background. The text is in a mix of blue and purple colors, with the number '1,000,000' in blue and 'PEOPLE' in a large, bold, purple font.

How to organise your event – step by step

Organising a Know Your Blood Pressure event is straightforward. Take some time to read through the checklist below and the information on the following pages, particularly if you are new to KYBP.

Before the event:	
Finalise your venue and chosen date	<input type="checkbox"/>
Register your event with the KYBP team using the contact details provided at the front of this guide	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruit volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruit people to take blood pressure measurements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Order your materials at least three weeks before your event	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check you have all the equipment you need on the day	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carry out a risk assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>
If necessary, provide a copy of the Stroke Association insurance certificate to the venue	<input type="checkbox"/>
On the day:	
Talk to passers-by about preventing stroke and hand out materials as appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage as many passers-by as possible to have a look at the stand and have their blood pressure taken	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete a Personal Information Record for everyone who has their blood pressure taken	<input type="checkbox"/>
After the event:	
Return completed copies of the Personal Information Records to the Stroke Association as soon as possible, using the freepost address provided.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Send a post-event release to the local media	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact us and let us know how your event went – we'd love to hear from you and see any photos you take on the day!	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete an evaluation form online at stroke.org.uk/kybp	<input type="checkbox"/>

For further guidance, please visit our website **stroke.org.uk/kybp** or get in touch using the contact details at the front of this guide.

Organising your event

Where can I hold my event?

Know Your Blood Pressure events are designed to reach as many people as possible so it is best to organise them in a busy public place that's easy to get to. Good examples include shopping centres, supermarkets and leisure centres. You might also work with your local community to identify other locations, including places of worship such as mosques, temples and Gurdwara.

You will need enough space for the following:

- A registration table. The table will need to be large enough to display your Know your Blood Pressure leaflets, factsheets and other materials
- Comfortable seating
- As many blood pressure testing stations as required, depending on the number of health professionals or trained volunteers who are supporting your event. Each station will need two chairs, one for the participant, one for the health professional, and a table. If you have space, you might like to screen an area off to provide privacy.

Any Know Your Blood Pressure posters you have ordered should be displayed prominently to attract visitors.



Who will I need to help at my event?

You will need volunteers to support your event. At a minimum you will need one person to take blood pressures and one person to talk to visitors. These helpers will man the registration stand, encourage passers-by to come and have a look at the stand, distribute information leaflets and sometimes demonstrate the FAST test.

Who can take blood pressure measurements at my event?

Blood pressure readings must only be taken by clinically trained healthcare professionals or volunteers who have been trained to do so by attending the Stroke Association's Stroke Prevention Awareness training session. There are two ways to take a blood pressure reading – manually or using a digital machine. The method you are using will influence exactly who is able to take the blood pressure tests.

Automatic blood pressure readings

Taking readings using a digital sphygmomanometer is usually less complicated than taking a reading manually but should still only be undertaken by somebody who has been trained to do so. As well as health professionals, suitably trained volunteers might include St John Ambulance, St Andrew's First Aid or Red Cross personnel or anyone who has received the Stroke Association's Stroke Prevention Awareness training.

If you are seeking to recruit health professionals or trained volunteers to help take readings at your event, it might be useful to approach your local:

- ambulance station
- GP surgeries/medical centres
- hospitals, especially A&E and stroke units
- district and community nurses
- St John Ambulance, St Andrew's First Aid or British Red Cross.

Manual blood pressure readings

Taking readings using an aneroid sphygmomanometer is a skilled task and must only be undertaken by somebody who has been trained and is fully competent to do so. Health professionals who should be able to take manual blood pressure readings include: doctors, nurses, paramedics, emergency care assistants, paramedic practitioners, ambulance technicians, and health care assistants (if trained).

Taking blood pressure readings requires a lot of concentration and can be tiring. Please ensure that you have a rota for everyone who is taking blood pressure readings, with each working no more than two hours without a break.

What equipment will I need for my event?

You will need blood pressure testing equipment for each of your testing stations. Many health professionals will have their own equipment but we advise that you check with all those taking part whether they will be bringing their own equipment or whether you will need to provide it for them. Loans can sometimes be arranged with GP surgeries, out-patient departments and health promotion units.

You will also need pens, hand cleanser, and a supply of Stroke Association materials, which you can order by completing the form online at **www.stroke.org.uk/kybp**. For more information on the materials available and guidance on quantities, please see page 12.

What forms do I need for my event?

Please see page 15 for details of the forms you will need before, during and after your event.

What about insurance?

It is important that every Know Your Blood Pressure event is registered with the Stroke Association in advance, in order for it to be covered by our insurance policy. If you have already received your event reference number, then your event has been registered. If you still need to register your event, please contact us as soon as possible using the details at the end of this guide. A detailed section about insurance queries relating to Know Your Blood Pressure events is provided on our website: **www.stroke.org.uk/kybp**

Do I need a risk assessment?

It is your responsibility as the event organiser to conduct a risk assessment before organising any event. You may be asked to provide a copy of a risk assessment by your venue. Please visit our website: **www.stroke.org.uk/kybp** for further advice and a risk assessment template for your own use.

More detailed information about risk assessment can also be accessed via the Health and Safety Executive website: **www.hse.gov.uk/risk**

Can I fundraise at my event?

We are a charity and rely on donations to help support the important work we do? You can have a collection at your event – all you need are some collection buckets or tins – it's that simple!

Please contact us at **kybp@stroke.org.uk** if you would like more information about fundraising on the day of your event. Alternatively, you can contact your regional Community Events and Fundraising Manager. You can find their details on the 'in your area' section of our website at **www.stroke.org.uk**

Ordering your materials

In order to ensure your event runs as smoothly as possible, please order your materials as early as possible and at least three weeks before your event, to make sure they arrive in plenty of time.

Know Your Blood Pressure materials

At a minimum, you should order a supply of the following core materials

- Know Your Blood Pressure information leaflet
- Personal Information Record pads

The Know Your Blood Pressure information leaflet should be given to everyone who has their blood pressure taken. Therefore, please order enough of these to ensure you do not run out.

Each Personal Information Record pad includes enough forms for 50 people. Please only order the number of pads necessary for the size and expected footfall of your location.

Promotional items

Posters can be a useful way of attracting passers-by on the day of your event, and are particularly eye-catching. Order a couple to display on your stand.

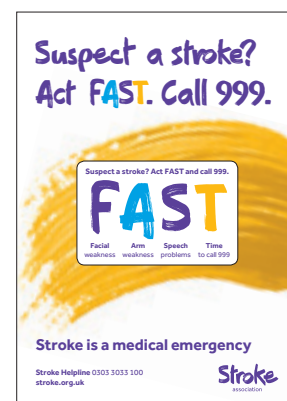
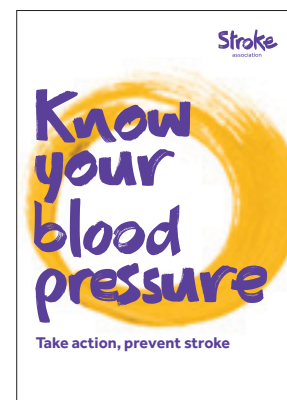
If you are able to display posters in your local area ahead of your event, please order some pre-event posters, to encourage people to attend. These posters include space for you to add the event venue, date and time.

Stroke Association leaflets, posters and factsheets

We have a number of leaflets and posters available for you to display at your event if appropriate. Some may be more relevant than others, and we would suggest that you may wish to have a supply of the **“High blood pressure and stroke”** factsheet for those participants who would like more detailed information, along with the A5 **FAST** leaflet/cards, to accompany the FAST message being given by your health professionals and volunteers.

We would suggest that you just order a small sample of these materials. It is important that the Know Your Blood Pressure leaflet is given to everyone having their blood pressure taken, but having a few sample materials on display might be useful.

You can complete a materials order form online at www.stroke.org.uk/kybp, or alternatively request a paper copy by emailing kybp@stroke.org.uk



Promoting your event

You've done the hard work organising your event, but don't forget to promote it in your local area, to encourage people to come along and get their blood pressure tested. Promoting the event is also an opportunity to gain coverage for your organisation and to build links with local media.

Before the event

- Send a news release to your local media contacts. You can use the template available on our website, or write your own. For guidance on writing your own release, visit **www.stroke.org.uk/kybp**. Send the release at least a week before your event, and follow it up with a phone call
- Display Know Your Blood Pressure promotional posters in your local area, advertising the date and time of your event. These can be ordered using the materials order form online
- Make use of social media channels to spread the word before your event.

On the day

- If possible, arrange for a local photographer to attend on the day. Include as much Know Your Blood Pressure branding in the picture as possible
- Try and take some photos for your own records too! We would love to see photographs from your event, so if you are happy to share them with us, please email **kybp@stroke.org.uk**.

After the event

- Send a post-event news release to your local media contacts. Again, you can use the template available on our website, or write your own. For guidance on writing your own release, visit **www.stroke.org.uk/kybp**
- Include a photograph where possible.

For further guidance on how to promote your event in your local area, please visit **www.stroke.org.uk/kybp**, where you will find hints and tips as well as pre and post event press release templates for you to use.

On the day – what happens at a Know Your Blood Pressure event?

1. Participant approaches the Know Your Blood Pressure event. The blood pressure test and why knowing your blood pressure can reduce the risk of stroke is explained to them.
↓
2. The participant signs the consent section of the Personal Information Record.
↓
3. A health professional or trained volunteer carries out the blood pressure test. Questions on the Personal Information Record should be asked at this time.
↓
4. If appropriate (*please see below), the person's pulse may also be checked.
↓
5. Where possible, a health professional or volunteer demonstrates the FAST test (see page 6) or FAST leaflets are provided.
↓
6. The Personal Information Record is completed and the blood pressure reading is explained. The participant is given the bottom copy of the Personal Information Record. You should also give them a copy of the Know Your Blood Pressure leaflet.
↓
7. BP cuff, stethoscope and tubing are cleaned if required according to the infection prevention and control guidelines (see page 23).

After the event, please return your copies of the Personal Information Record to the Stroke Association at the freepost address provided as soon as possible. The data we collect through the Personal Information Record is anonymous and allows us to have a greater understanding of blood pressure levels in the UK. We use this information to inform the work that we do, so we very much appreciate you taking the time to complete them. Please include your event number when returning forms.

After your event, you will receive a link to our post-event evaluation form which can be found on our website. We would be very grateful if you could take a few moments to complete this to help us improve the campaign.

* Some events (those undertaken by Ambulance Services ONLY) may also be able to offer ECG readings to members of the public who have an irregular pulse and may have atrial fibrillation.

Forms to be completed

There are a number of forms you need to complete before, during and after your event. Please read through the details below to ensure you have everything you need.

Before the event:	
Materials order form You should use the separate materials order form, available from www.stroke.org.uk/kybp to order leaflets, Personal Information Records, and supporting materials for your event. For more information about ordering materials, see page 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
On the day:	
Personal Information Records Ensure you have enough Personal Information Record pads for the day. The form consists of a series of fields to complete with the visitor. All information provided is anonymous and questions indicated as optional are to be asked at the discretion of each event organiser and healthcare professional. For more detail on completing this form, please refer to page 17 Please return the top sheet to the Stroke Association as soon as possible after your event.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteer Application Form If anyone who helps at your event would like to register as a Stroke Association volunteer, please direct them to our website www.stroke.org.uk/involved/volunteer There are a number of opportunities available across the UK.	<input type="checkbox"/>
After the event:	
Evaluation form Your feedback is invaluable to us in monitoring the success of the Know Your Blood Pressure campaign. You will be sent a link to the evaluation form, to complete online, after your event.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consent Form - Health care professional

Event number: –

Please ensure that all Health care professionals and trained volunteers read the conditions set out below before signing this document.

Thank you for volunteering to become involved with our *Know Your Blood Pressure* event. Please read the following statement and sign the disclaimer to confirm you are appropriately trained to perform the task you have been asked to undertake at this event.

- I am appropriately and professionally trained to take blood pressure readings (if applicable), and have the relevant experience in this activity.
- I agree to use the forms provided by the Stroke Association for this event and to fill them in accurately and completely.
- I am aware blood pressure readings are accurate at the time given, but I understand they can vary from day to day.
- I understand that this is not a medical examination and for advice on health I should direct people to consult their doctor.
- I acknowledge that any photograph taken of me may be used for promotional purposes by the Stroke Association or the organisation running this *Know Your Blood Pressure* event. I have read the above and confirm my agreement to the terms thereof.

Name	Email Address (only required if you would like us to send you information about the Stroke Association)	Please tick here if you do NOT wish to hear from organisations other than the Stroke Association		Signature
			<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	

Personal Information Records - Guidelines

Each person who has their blood pressure tested at a Know Your Blood Pressure event must be given a completed Personal Information Record. This tells them their blood pressure reading and outlines what action they should take.

The Personal Information Record is a NCR form. The bottom sheet of paper will be given to the person who has their blood pressure tested. The top sheet of paper will be collected by the event organiser and posted back to the Stroke Association using the freepost address provided.

What do we use the forms for?

We collect the data from each Know Your Blood Pressure event and use the information to build a picture of blood pressure across the UK and in specific regions. By understanding the prevalence of high blood pressure across the UK, we are able to target our stroke prevention activity where it is needed most.

Referrals and advice

Please ensure that your health professionals and trained volunteers refer very carefully to the Stroke Association's referral advice on page 19. It may be useful to photocopy this guidance page to have at each blood pressure testing station for reference.

01. Basic information:

Enter the date of your event, the event number and first half of the participant's postcode. We use the first half of the postcode to track stroke risk factors by constituency so that we can petition local authorities and commissioners for better services.

02. Risk factor questions:

Select the appropriate answers. These questions enable you to chat to the participant about what might affect their risk of stroke.

03. Blood pressure test:

- a. **Blood pressure reading:**
if it is raised, take it a second and third time and write the figures in the space next to the box.
- b. **Guidance:** select the box appropriate and explain what this means. Referring back to the risk factor question responses is a useful aid for this conversation.

04. Additional discussions (optional):

- a. **Discuss Atrial Fibrillation:** tick the box to indicate whether you have spoken to the participant about what atrial fibrillation is, and why its important to check your own pulse. If a trained medical professional is happy to do so, they can perform pulse checks and write the pulse rate in the space next to the box.
- b. **FAST:** tick the box if the participant understands the FAST test, if not explain what the acronym means and how to carry out the test.

05. Consent signature:

Ask the person to read the statement, which explains that this is guidance and not a diagnosis and permission to be photographed. A large print version of this text is on the back of the cover of PIR pads and also available online for you to download. Do this before the BP test is taken.

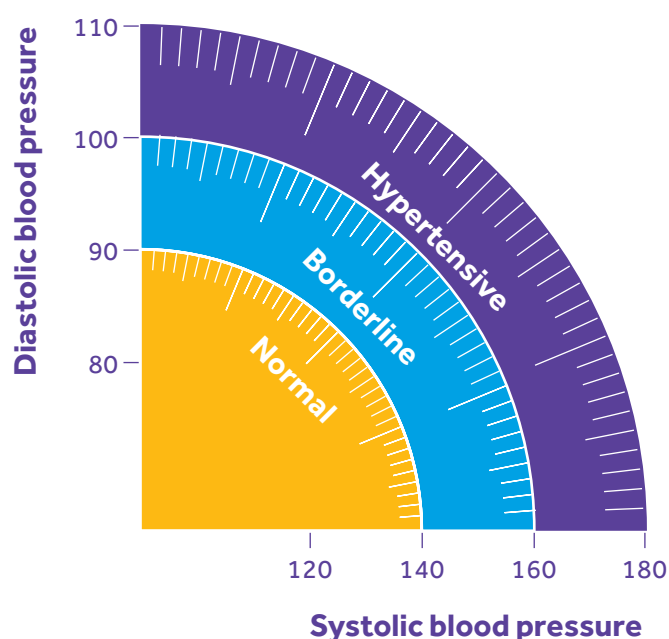
06. Email:

If the participant would like to know more about stroke and our work, encourage them to leave their email address. Though the opt out is there, we never share data with other companies.

Interpretation of blood pressure readings and referrals

Blood pressure readings are always expressed as a fraction, with the systolic reading written before the diastolic figure. Both pressures are measured in millimetres of mercury, written as mmHg.

Optimal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mmHg. The chart below shows the range of blood pressure readings and the categories into which they fall.



Recommended action

Once you have confirmed the blood pressure reading, refer to the chart on page 19. It tells you what action to take and which box to tick on the Personal Information Record.

Please remember that, whilst guidance must be given when identifying people who may be 'at risk', it is important not to cause undue alarm.

Participants should not be informed that they have hypertension but rather advised that the reading indicated that they **may** be suffering from hypertension. Please remind them a definitive diagnosis is only possible once the initial raised blood pressure measurement has been confirmed by their GP on two or more subsequent occasions.

You may find it useful to photocopy this double page, for reference at each blood pressure testing station

	Blood pressure reading	Considered to be	Range	Referral advice	Action
	below 120/80 mmHg	Optimal	Normal blood pressure	No further action required	Select 'No further action required' on the <i>Personal Information Record</i>
	120/80 – 129/85 mmHg	Normal	Normal blood pressure	No further action required	Select 'No further action required' on the <i>Personal Information Record</i>
	130/85 – 139/89 mmHg	Higher normal	Normal blood pressure	No further action required	Select 'No further action required' on the <i>Personal Information Record</i>
	140/90 – 159/99 mmHg (or over 130/80 mmHg if the person has diabetes)	Mild hypertension	High blood pressure	Advise person to contact GP surgery within one month as a follow-up appointment may be required.	Select 'Routine follow up' on the <i>Personal Information Record</i>
	160/100 – 179/109 mmHg	Moderate hypertension	High blood pressure	Advise person to contact GP surgery within one month as a follow-up appointment may be required.	Select 'Routine follow up' on the <i>Personal Information Record</i>
	180/110 + mmHg	Severe hypertension	High blood pressure	Advise person to contact GP surgery within one week as an urgent follow up appointment is required.	Select 'Urgent follow up' on the <i>Personal Information Record</i>
	180/110 + mmHg and showing any of the following symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • headache • retinal haemorrhage • palpitations • papilloedema • pallor • diaphoresis 	Severe hypertension and symptomatic	High blood pressure	Hospital admission may be necessary – seek medical attention immediately.	Select 'Hospital admission advised' on the <i>Personal Information Record</i> and seek immediate medical attention.

Taking blood pressures

For Reference

Please note that the guidance provided in this section is not intended as a comprehensive training resource but merely as a reference.

For more information please refer to the comprehensive advice available at www.stroke.org.uk/kybp

This section is designed to provide guidance to **health professionals** and **trained volunteers** who are taking blood pressure readings as part of a Know Your Blood Pressure event. As well as information and practical advice about obtaining accurate blood pressure readings, it also outlines a clear procedure for referrals and the provision of further information to members of the public who have had their blood pressure screened.

Blood pressure readings can be taken using either an aneroid (manual) or digital (automatic) sphygmomanometer. Make sure you treat your sphygmomanometer with care as it is delicate. You must ensure that it is calibrated in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.



Taking blood pressures at Know Your Blood Pressure events

For Reference

Although you may frequently take blood pressure measurements as part of your normal clinical practice, it is important that the same technique is consistently applied.

Know Your Blood Pressure events often take place in busy places so here are some tips to make the blood pressure screening experience as comfortable as possible:

- **Make the person feel at ease** – Allow the person some time to rest before taking their blood pressure, this can be done while they fill in their Personal Information Record
- **Privacy** – If it is not possible to screen off an area, try to make sure that you are not overlooked at one end of a table
- **Both seated** – For the protection of your back and to help the person feel comfortable make sure that you are also seated when taking the reading.

Factors which may affect blood pressure readings

- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Smoking
- Eating
- Exercise
- Recreational drugs
- Stress/anxiety
- Family history
- Pre-existing medical conditions
- Prescribed drugs

Note: Please be aware that if a person is already on medication for hypertension it can result in an unusual reading.

Remember

- **No sleeve or a loose sleeve is best** – It is best to take a blood pressure on an arm free of clothing but if the person needs to roll up their sleeve make sure that it's not too tight because this can restrict blood flow
- **Use the right size cuff for arm** – It is very important to use a cuff that fits. Taking a blood pressure with a cuff that is too small can result in a raised reading
- **Best of three** – Where blood pressure is raised, if possible take two further readings with at least five minutes between each, recording the lowest reading.

How to use an automatic machine (digital sphygmomanometer)

For Reference

1. The first step is to explain the procedure to allay any fear or anxiety. Those having their blood pressure measured for the first time should be informed that some minor discomfort may be caused by the inflation of the cuff.
2. Sit the person down and rest their arm so that the forearm is at the level of the heart. Lowering of the arm below heart level will lead to an overestimation of systolic and diastolic pressures, while raising it above will cause an underestimation.
3. Ensure the person's arm is supported on the table. This is important because lack of support can increase the blood pressure and heart rate by as much as 10 per cent.
4. Using the left arm is thought to be better as it is nearer the heart, therefore giving the optimum reading. Pressure may vary in each arm so if blood pressure is raised it is worth checking on the other arm.
5. It is best to take a blood pressure reading on an arm free of clothing but if the person needs to roll up their sleeve make sure that it's not too tight as this can restrict blood flow.
6. Use the correct size cuff for the arm. One that is too short will cause an overestimation of blood pressure while one that is too long will cause an underestimation of up to 10-30 mmHg. Wrap the cuff around the arm. The lower edge should be 2-3 cm above the point of the brachial artery pulsation.
7. Press the button and wait quietly for the cuff to inflate and deflate (it is important to refrain from talking as the machine is sensitive to noise).
8. When the arm cuff has fully deflated, consult the digital display for the blood pressure reading.

If you get a very high reading with an automatic machine, please take another reading after a few minutes.

Will you be using a manual machine (aneroid sphygmomanometer)?

Further guidance and information can be found at www.stroke.org.uk/kybp

Infection prevention and control

For Reference

The following **guidance**, prepared by representatives from the College of Paramedics should apply.

Hand hygiene

- Use alcohol hand rub before contact with each patient and then afterwards, prior to cleaning equipment. Hand washing facilities can also be used if available
- Clean hands with soap and water prior to and after eating, and especially if they become visibly soiled or if contact with body fluid occurs
- Prevent dry skin by providing moisturising creams. You may also choose to wear protective gloves if you wish.

Cleaning equipment

Stethoscopes, BP cuffs and ECG leads are considered low risk items, as they normally only come into contact with intact healthy skin. However, there is some evidence that stethoscopes and BP cuffs can become contaminated with micro-organisms after multiple contacts. If the participant has an inflammatory skin condition on their arms, the cuff should be placed over light clothing, rather than directly on the skin. Equipment can be cleaned with a detergent/sanitising surface wipe and either air-dried or wiped dry with a clean paper towel after patient use.

We are the Stroke Association.

We believe that stroke can and should be prevented. It's why we fund research to develop new treatments and ways to prevent stroke. It's why we raise awareness and give people the information they need to reduce their risk of having a stroke. We'd rather no one had a stroke at all, but if they do, we're with them every step of the way to make the best recovery they can.

We are a charity. We rely on your support to change lives and prevent stroke.

Stroke Helpline: 0303 3033 100

Website: stroke.org.uk

Email: info@stroke.org.uk

From a textphone: 18001 0303 3033 100

We are a charity and we rely on your support to change the lives of people affected by stroke and reduce the number of people who are struck down by this devastating disease.

Please help us to make a difference today.

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