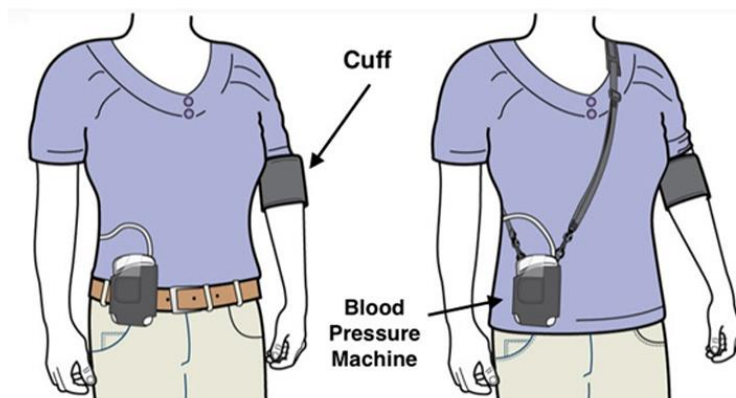


Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring (ABPM) and Electrocardiogram (ECG)

You have been recommended to be fitted with a 24 hour blood pressure monitor. If you have not had an ECG within the last year, the appointment will include an ECG. This guide will explain why and what is involved. **Please be sure to read through this carefully before your upcoming appointment to help you prepare.**

Firstly, what is ambulatory blood pressure monitoring?

Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM) is when your blood pressure is automatically measured by a device (pictured) at regular points as you continue your normal daily life. Measurements are taken regularly for up to 24 hours.



Why is it necessary?

A normal blood pressure check can only provide a reading for your blood pressure at that moment in time. ABPM automatically measures your blood pressure throughout the day and night. This gives a clearer picture of how your blood pressure changes during normal daily activities. Some people can get higher readings when they are anxious about being tested. This is called 'white coat syndrome'. An ABPM helps rule this out.

Why do I need to have an ABPM?

There are several reasons why you may have been advised to have one. This can include:

- To diagnose high blood pressure (hypertension).
- To help decide if blood pressure medication is required.
- If you are already on medication, it can see how well your blood pressure medications are controlling your blood pressure throughout the day and if any changes are needed to any current medication.
- If your blood pressure is hard to control, the ABPM can help with further investigations.
- As measurements occur at night, an ABPM can also help doctors understand what happens to your blood pressure during the night.

Why might I need an ECG with an ABPM?

High blood pressure can affect the heart over time. An ECG helps us check your heart rhythm and gives us more information about your overall heart health.

Before your appointment:

- Try to wear loose fitting clothes. This will help during the appointment and to ensure you are as comfortable as possible afterwards.

HYTHE MEDICAL CENTRE

- Take any medications you have been prescribed as normal, unless advised by the GP or pharmacist not to.
- Do not use any lotions, oils or talcum powder on your skin. This is because we may not be able to carry out the ECG if the sticky patches won't attach to your skin.

During your appointment:

- The appointment will usually take about 20 minutes.
- The nurse or healthcare assistant will confirm your understanding of the procedure and that you are happy to proceed.
- They will carry out the ECG.
- If you wear a bra, you may be asked to remove it so the ECG stickers can be placed correctly. You will be given privacy to do this.
- If you have a hairy chest, we may need to shave the necessary areas.
- They will then show you the ABPM device and fit the monitor on your arm. It is usually applied to your left arm, although this is not compulsory.
- The first reading will be taken before you leave. This helps ensure the monitor is working correctly before you go home.

After your appointment:

- The ABPM should not get wet, so please avoid baths and showers during the 24-hour period.
- The device will take measurements every 30 minutes during the day and every 60 minutes during the night (from 10pm).
- During the daytime, the device will beep to alert you when it will be taking a reading. When this occurs:
 - Try to sit down, if possible
 - Position the arm that has the cuff on it at the same level as your heart and then keep your arm still
 - If you are not able to sit down, use your other arm to support you to achieve this position
 - If you are sitting down, do not cross your legs during the measurement
- We advise patients not to drive during the 24-hour monitoring period, as the cuff inflates regularly and may be distracting.
- Avoid vigorous exercise during the monitoring period. This will help avoid exercise related spikes in your blood pressure. A gentle or brisk walk is normally fine.
- Monitoring will occur at night, so consider where you place the device. This may include under a pillow, on the bed or on the bedside table.
- The device automatically stores all the readings.
- If you have any concerns or any questions, before or during the monitoring period, please contact the surgery during opening hours (8am-6pm).
- You can remove the cuff once the 24 hour period is over. You will then need to bring it back the day after you had it fitted. You can hand it back to the reception team.

Your results:

Results will be uploaded once you return the device. Our clinical pharmacist will then review them and take any action that may be needed. If your results do not need any urgent action,

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you may not need an appointment. We will contact you by text message or telephone if any changes or follow-up are needed.

If you haven't had an ECG before:

What is an ECG?

An ECG (electrocardiogram) is a test that records the electrical activity of your heart, including the rate and rhythm. It's usually quick and painless.

What happens during an ECG?

- You'll be asked to take off the clothes on the top half of your body, behind a screen.
- You'll be asked to lie back and the nurse or HCA will attach sticky patches (called electrodes) on your wrists, ankles and chest. These are attached to the ECG machine.
- You'll need to lie still for a few minutes while the ECG machine records the electrical signals that are created when your heart beats.
- The healthcare professional will remove the sticky patches from your skin. You might feel some slight discomfort when the patches are taken off your skin, a bit like when you take off a plaster.

You may get a slight rash where the patches were placed on your skin.