



**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

# Self-monitoring of your Blood Pressure after Birth

We have written this pamphlet to give you information about self-monitoring your blood pressure after birth. It explains:

1. How to take your blood pressure at home
2. What to do once you have taken your blood pressure.
3. Instructions for reducing your blood pressure medication

We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your LMC.

## Why am I being asked to take my blood pressure at home?

Either during your pregnancy or labour and birth you had high blood pressure (hypertension).

There are different types and causes for high blood pressure in pregnancy. The risks of high blood pressure do not always stop when your baby is born.

To ensure that your blood pressure returns to normal once you are home, we ask that you monitor your blood pressure at home for at least 7 days or until your LMC advises you to stop.

Your current blood pressure medication(s) is/are:

Name	Strength of tablet	Dose	Times per day taken

# How do I take my blood pressure?

You are asked to take your blood pressure for the first 7 days after giving birth. Your midwife or doctor will let you know if you need to continue to monitor your blood pressure after the first week.

Always measure your blood pressure using the same arm (normally the left arm). Wear loose clothing with sleeves that roll up easily and do not feel tight when rolled up (you will need to fit the cuff onto your bare arm) or take your arm out of the clothing.

1. Sit on a chair with your back supported and both feet flat on the floor. Rest for 5 minutes before beginning to take blood pressure readings
2. Slip the cuff onto your arm so that the air tube points towards your wrist. The yellow line on the cuff should be over the inside of your elbow.
3. Adjust the bottom edge of the cuff so that it is about 2cm above the inside of the elbow joint.
4. Tighten the cuff around the arm and secure using the Velcro.
5. Rest your arm on a table or across your lap with your hand slightly open and the palm facing upward.
6. Once the machine is set up and you have the cuff in the correct position, and you are ready to start, press the start button on the front of the machine to take a reading.
7. Relax, do not move your arm muscles and do not talk until the measurement is completed.
8. Each time you measure your blood pressure you will get two readings:
  - The top number (usually called SYS, short for systolic)
  - The bottom number of your blood pressure, (usually called DIA, short for diastolic)
  - You may also get the pulse displayed, usually called PUL
9. Measure your blood pressure twice, at least one minute apart. Write down the second blood pressure reading on the back of this pamphlet.
10. Show this pamphlet to your midwife each time they visit you or bring it to hospital if you need to come.

# What should I do once I have taken my blood pressure?

Level	Blood pressure	Action
<b>Low</b>	SYS 109 or less or DIA 69 or less	<p>If you are not taking blood pressure medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your blood pressure is normal, if you are feeling well, you do not need to take any further action.</li> </ul> <p>If you are taking blood pressure medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your blood pressure is low. Repeat once more in 5 minutes.</li> <li>If your repeat reading is still low, contact Womens Assessment Unit (WAU) on 021 912 428 for advice within 24 hours.</li> <li>If you feel unwell (dizzy or faint) , please contact WAU on 021 912 428 within 4 hours. You may need to reduce or stop your blood pressure treatment.</li> </ul>
<b>Normal</b>	SYS 110-139 and DIA 70-89	Continue blood pressure monitoring and if you are taking medication, continue this.
<b>Raised</b>	SYS 140-149 or DIA 90-99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit quietly for 5 minutes then measure it again and write down the reading.</li> <li>If the repeat reading is raised contact WAU on 021 912 428 for advice within 24 hours.</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	SYS 150 or more or DIA 100 or more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit quietly for 5 minutes then measure it again and write down the reading.</li> <li>If your repeated reading is raised, contact WAU on 021 912 428 for advice. Do not wait more than four hours before making this phone call. You may need an appointment to be seen today.</li> <li>If you have headaches or abdominal pain, please phone WAU on 021 912 428 straight away. You should not wait longer than an hour before you phone WAU.</li> </ul>

Contact Womens Assessment unit on 021 912 428 if you have any of the following symptoms

- Headache that is not relieved by taking Panadol with a large glass of water
- Visual disturbances (such as floating spots or blurry vision)
- Upper abdominal pain
- Dizziness

## Record your blood pressure reading

Your blood pressure is a measurement of the force required for your heart to pump blood around your body. Each time you measure your blood pressure you will get two readings:

- The top number (systolic, usually called SYS for short) measures the pressure when your heart beats and pumps blood around your body.
- The bottom number (diastolic, usually called DIA for short) measures the pressure when your heart is resting in between beats.
- Your pulse (the rate your heart is beating) may also be displayed (usually called PUL)

You will need to arrange a visit with your GP at around 6 weeks after giving birth to check your blood pressure and plan your future care. Some women who have high blood pressure during pregnancy are at increased risk of having it in future pregnancies or later in life.







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