

24-Hour Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring (ABPM)

What is it?

24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring is a way of measuring your blood pressure over a 24-hour period.

Why is it done?

A single blood pressure measurement is not usually accurate enough to diagnose high or low blood pressure. This is because blood pressure normally fluctuates throughout the day and can be affected by events such as visiting a health professional. An ABP monitor will take a reading approximately every 30 minutes during the day and every hour during the night. It will also take an extra reading at a randomly chosen time, to prevent the reading to be affected by the anticipation of a blood pressure reading. An ABP monitor measures your blood pressure whilst you undertake your normal daily activities and in the location you normally would be.

An ABP monitor can also be used to evaluate the effects of medication on blood pressure.

How is it done?

A member of staff will explain the procedure to you. A blood pressure cuff is then fitted to one of your arms. It is advisable to wear clothing that enables easy access to the part of your arms just above the elbow. A tube from the cuff will be passed through your clothing to a monitor worn with a belt around your waist or across the body.

It is very important that you keep the arm with the cuff fitted relaxed by your side when the cuff inflates. Arm movement is a common cause for a failed reading and the device will inflate again if the first reading has failed.

Many patients report the test as mildly uncomfortable, especially when the cuff has inflated repeatedly due to failed readings. If you feel the discomfort is no longer bearable, the cuff can easily be removed from the arm by undoing the Velcro.

In any case, the equipment is to be returned to our department approximately 24 hours after the device was fitted.

In some rare cases the test may need to be repeated due to a technical fault or multiple failed readings. If this is the case you will be contacted for a new appointment.

The results will be sent to the doctor who requested the test and will not be available to you directly.

It is important that you do not have a bath or shower whilst you are wearing the device. If you have any doubts or worries, please discuss these with the member of staff when you come in for your appointment.

Information for Patients

Cardiology

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If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk.