



AF or high blood pressure – staff guidance

Category	Systolic BP	Boolean	Diastolic BP	Action
Optimal	<120	and	<80	No further action
Normal	120-129	and	<85	
High normal	130-139	and/or	85-89	
Mild hypertension	140-159	and/or	90-99	Complete GP notification letter. Advise patient to deliver to GP within 7 days
Moderate hypertension	160-179	and/or	100-109	
Severe Hypertension Asymptomatic	≥ 180	and/or	≥ 110	Complete GP notification letter. Advise patient to deliver to GP next working day
Severe Hypertension Symptomatic with any of the following emergency red flags: • headache • palpitations • pallor • diaphoresis (sweating) • papilledema • retinal haemorrhage	≥ 180	and/or	≥ 110	Symptomatic patients who are severely hypertensive with any of the emergency red flags should be considered for admission



Management of incidental findings atrial fibrillation or high blood pressure

High blood pressure and undiagnosed atrial fibrillation (AF) are high risk factors for experiencing a stroke.

Despite being one of the most important preventable causes of premature morbidity and mortality, national and international surveys continue to demonstrate substantial under-diagnosis, under-treatment and poor rates of blood pressure control in the UK.

Treating hypertension has been associated with a 40 per cent reduction in the risk of stroke and a 15 per cent reduction in the risk of myocardial infarction.

AF is associated with a five-fold increase in the risk of stroke with the overall annual incidence of strokes attributable to AF increasing from 1.5 per cent at age 50-59 years to 23.5 per cent at age 80-89 years. Approximately one quarter of all people experiencing a stroke are in AF.

AF is currently both under recognised and under treated, as many patients remain asymptomatic.

Screening of patients for AF or high blood pressure

All compliant patients that are not conveyed to hospital should be screened for high blood pressure and undiagnosed atrial fibrillation.

NICE guidance recommends that an ECG should be performed in all patients, whether symptomatic or not, in whom AF is suspected because of an irregular pulse.

Atrial fibrillation referral guidelines

ECG	Action
Atrial fibrillation - asymptomatic	Complete GP notification letter. Attach rhythm strip to letter and/or place in envelope. Advise patient to deliver to GP next working day

Measuring blood pressure

If the first blood pressure reading exceeds 140/90mmHg, a second reading should be obtained. Wait for at least five minutes before repeating the test and try to encourage the patient to relax. If the second reading remains above 140/90mmHg, then the referral guidelines should be followed.

Blood pressure referral guidelines

In patients with diabetes, a lower threshold of >130/80 mmHg should be used to indicate hypertension.

Further Information

Know Your Blood Pressure Clinical Guidelines (Stroke Association, 2010)

www.stroke.org.uk/campaigns/current_campaigns/know_your_blood_pressure/

For any further information or queries contact david.coates@gwas.nhs.uk