

Patient information

Managing high blood pressure before your operation

What is hypertension?

Hypertension is the medical term for high blood pressure. Blood pressure is the measure of the pressure of the blood as it flows through the arteries. When it is measured 2 numbers are recorded. The higher number (systolic pressure) is the pressure produced when the heart is contracting. The lower number (diastolic pressure) is the pressure it falls back to when the heart is relaxed.

Blood pressure varies between individuals and usually rises with age. Occasionally it may be caused by an underlying problem but usually there is no underlying cause.

High blood pressure affects 10 million people in the UK and even 1 in 600 children. It does not usually cause problems in everyday life and rarely causes symptoms unless very high. However over a long period of time untreated hypertension increases the risk of having a stroke or a heart attack.

Current recommendations suggest that blood pressure which is regularly higher than 180/110 should be treated, and for many groups the recommended levels are lower, for example 160/100.

Your GP and anaesthetist may feel that a different target blood pressure is right for you - they will be happy to discuss this.

Why is high blood pressure important?

As previously mentioned, having high blood pressure over a long period of time can increase your risk of a stroke or heart attack, particularly if you have other problems such as kidney disease or diabetes.

Your consultant has probably mentioned to you that having an operation and anaesthetic carries some risks. The risk of having a heart attack and stroke during

or shortly after the operation can be reduced by making sure your blood pressure is as good as it can be before surgery.

Sometimes being anxious or rushing to an appointment can make your blood pressure go up. We have therefore asked you to have your blood pressure checked 2 or 3 times by your doctor's surgery. If these readings are normal, please let us know so that we can go ahead with surgery as planned. If you need to start or change medication please also let us know as we may need to postpone your surgery for a short time.

Normally the anaesthetist would like to see that your blood pressure is controlled at the target level (for example, lower than 160/100) for at least 6 weeks prior to surgery.

You can help to lower your blood pressure by reducing fat, salt and alcohol intake and taking regular exercise. If you are overweight, losing weight will also help.

Blood pressure readings

Readings at pre-operative clinic

1 /

2 /

3 /

Current medication:

Readings in doctor's surgery / home

4 /

5 /

6 /

Medication started or changed:

Please bring this leaflet with you to clinic / on admission.

The clinic can be contact on: if you have any problems or questions.