

Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring: What You Need to Know

An IMCare patient education handout

What is Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring?

Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM) is a test that measures your blood pressure throughout the day and night. It uses a small device that you wear on your arm, connected to a cuff that wraps around your upper arm. The device records your blood pressure at regular intervals, usually every 15 to 30 minutes, for 24 to 48 hours.

ABPM can help your doctor diagnose high blood pressure (hypertension) or low blood pressure (hypotension) more accurately than a single measurement in the clinic. It can also show how your blood pressure changes during different activities, such as exercise, sleep, or stress.

ABPM Test is not covered by OHIP and hence there is a charge for this test.

Why is ABPM Important for Diagnosis?

ABPM can provide more information about your blood pressure than a single measurement in the clinic. Some people have normal blood pressure in the clinic, but high blood pressure at other times. This is called masked hypertension. Other people have high blood pressure in the clinic, but normal blood pressure at other times. This is called white coat hypertension. Both conditions can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney damage.

ABPM can also detect other blood pressure patterns, such as nocturnal hypertension (high blood pressure at night), morning surge (a sudden rise in blood pressure in the morning), or dipping status (how much your blood pressure drops during sleep). These patterns can help your doctor determine the best treatment for your blood pressure.

How to Prepare for ABPM?

- Wear loose-fitting clothing that can accommodate the cuff and the device.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, and medications that can affect your blood pressure, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

- Keep a diary of your activities, symptoms, and medications during the test. This can help your doctor interpret the results.
- Follow your normal routine as much as possible. Do not avoid or change your usual activities because of the test.
- Keep your arm still and straight when the device inflates the cuff.
- Keep the device and the cuff dry.

What to Expect During ABPM?

During ABPM, you will wear the device and the cuff for 24 hours. The device will record your blood pressure at regular intervals, usually every 15 to 30 minutes during the day and every 30 to 60 minutes at night. The cuff will squeeze your arm for a few seconds and then deflate. You may feel some discomfort or pressure, but it should not be painful. If you have any problems or concerns, you can contact your doctor or the clinic.

After the test is over, you will return the device and the cuff to the clinic. We will download the data from the device and analyze the results. You will receive a report that shows your blood pressure readings and patterns. Your doctor will discuss the results with you and recommend any changes in your treatment or lifestyle.

What to Expect After ABPM?

The report for the ABPM test will be sent to the ordering physician/NP within 5 days. Please discuss the results with the ordering physician / NP.