

NICE guidelines change how high blood pressure is diagnosed and treated

Statement from the British Hypertension Society August 2011

High blood pressure is one of the most important preventable causes of heart disease and stroke in the UK.

NICE has today (Wednesday 24 August) published updated guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure (hypertension) which were developed in partnership with the British Hypertension Society (BHS) <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG127>. See below for links to the full guidance and implementation resources.

In one of the biggest changes to NICE's previous guidance, published in 2006, the new 2011 guideline recommends that a diagnosis of primary hypertension should be confirmed using 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM) as gold standard rather than be based solely on measurements of blood pressure taken in the clinic. Furthermore the implementation of ABPM in diagnosis would be cost saving for the NHS (published in the Lancet 24/08/11).

The Guideline also gives a framework for use of home blood pressure monitoring (HBPM). For the first time this change empowers patients to become more involved in the monitoring and care of their hypertension.

The NICE guideline also recommends changing the priority of medicines used to treat hypertension in people over the age of 55, focusing upon calcium channel blockers, based on evidence of event reduction and importantly, cost-effectiveness. Thiazide-like diuretics represent an alternative for those with heart failure or the very elderly who are intolerant of calcium channel blockers. In addition, the evidence around the choice of thiazide-like diuretics suggests that chlortalidone or indapamide may be more effective than bendroflumethiazide. For the first time, the Guideline offers advice on treating hypertension in the very elderly (people aged over 80). New cost-effectiveness analysis shows that the cost of treating hypertension is now cheaper than doing nothing.

Professor Mark Caulfield, President of the British Hypertension Society and Guideline Development Group member said: "The British Hypertension Society is delighted to have partnered NICE in this new guideline which represents a major advance in the diagnosis and treatment of people with high blood pressure."

Link to NICE Hypertension Guideline Page:

<http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG127>

Full Version of the Hypertension Guideline:

<http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG127/NICEGuidance/pdf/English>

Quick Reference Guide:

<http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG127/QuickRefGuide/pdf/English>

Understanding NICE Guidance: A Summary for Patients and Carers:

<http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG127/PublicInfo/pdf/English>

NICE has developed the following tools to assist with implementation:

- [Slides](#) highlighting key messages for local discussion.
- Costing tools:
 - [costing report](#) to estimate the national savings and costs associated with implementing the ABPM recommendations
 - [costing template](#) to estimate the local costs and savings involved in implementing the ABPM recommendations.
- [Audit support](#), including [electronic audit tool](#) for monitoring local practice.
- [Baseline assessment tool](#) to help you identify which areas of practice may need more support, decide on clinical audit topics and prioritise implementation activities.
- [Clinical case scenarios](#) to illustrate how the recommendations from the guideline can be applied to the care of patients presenting to primary care.
- [Implementation advice](#) on how to increase capacity for ABPM in order to facilitate implementation of the ABPM recommendations in practice.