

Postnatal Hypertension (High Blood Pressure after Birth)

Advice for women after pregnancy with hypertension



Women who develop blood pressure disorders in pregnancy have a higher chance of developing heart and kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke in the future than women who did not have blood pressure problems.

These medical complications are commonly known as cardiovascular or heart disease. Not all women who had pre-eclampsia or high blood pressure in pregnancy will go on to develop future heart complications and high blood pressure.

Following a healthy lifestyle with moderate to vigorous intensity exercise daily and eating a healthy balanced diet will lower your chance of heart disease in the future.

It is important that you see your GP regularly (every 6 to 12 months) to monitor for the signs and symptoms of heart disease. This will include a blood pressure check and blood tests.



2x risk of HEART DISEASE

Pre-eclampsia doubles your risk of heart disease in later life.



2x risk of STROKE

Pre-eclampsia doubles your risk of stroke in later life.



4x risk of HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

You are 4 times more likely to have high blood pressure if you had a pre-eclampsia.

What You Need To Know

About your future risks



Higher risk of DIABETES

Pre-eclampsia can cause an increased resistance to insulin in your body. This means you have a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes in later life.



2 out of 3 women will die from heart disease

If you had pre-eclampsia, your risk of dying from cardiovascular related diseases is more than double.



Your risks are higher if...

- Your baby was born prematurely
- You had early onset or severe pre-eclampsia
- Your baby had a low birth weight
- You had pre-eclampsia in more than one pregnancy

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What foods should I eat?

The British Heart Foundation recommends eating lots of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, lean protein foods and healthy fats. Saturated fats found in biscuits, cakes, butter and cheese are bad for your heart but unsaturated fats found in avocados, olive oil, fish and nuts are healthy.

How often should I exercise?

You should exercise for at least 150 minutes a week. That breaks down to five days a week of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity exercise. You do not have to join a gym to exercise - getting outside and walking briskly counts as moderate exercise. Over time, you may build up your speed to jogging or running.

What body weight should I aim for?

You should ask your GP to calculate your body mass index. Everyone has a different target weight according to their height. Your GP can tell you what a healthy weight for your height is and how to prevent obesity. Maintaining a healthy weight will reduce your risk of heart disease and its associated complications.

Do I need to see my GP?

Yes. Please make an appointment to see your GP at six to eight weeks after the birth of your baby. You should tell your GP that you have had high blood pressure in pregnancy or pre-eclampsia. Your GP can guide you on changing blood pressure medication doses or stopping your medication if your blood pressure returns to normal. You should have blood pressure checks with your GP at least once a year.

5 Tips

To reduce your risk of heart disease

1



Stop Smoking

Smoking causes high blood pressure and damages your blood vessels. If you stop smoking:

- Your risk of having a heart attack is halved
- Within 5 years of quitting, your risk of having a stroke is the same as a non-smoker

2



Eat a healthy diet

Choosing healthy meals and snacks will:

- Minimise weight gain
- Reduce risk of diabetes
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce cholesterol
- Reduce your risk of heart attack

3



Exercise Regularly

You should aim for 30 minutes of exercise 4-5 days a week. Regular exercise lowers your blood pressure, lifts your mood and minimises weight gain.

4



Regular health check-ups

You should see your GP at least once a year to monitor your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

5



Maintain a healthy weight

Keeping your weight in check will lower your blood pressure and the strain on your heart

Source

Useful sources of information

The British Heart Foundation

Website: www.bhf.org.uk

Action on Pre-eclampsia (APEC)

Website: www.action-on-pre-eclampsia.org.uk

For more information, leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

Additional Comments:



Reference: MAT_PNH_LP_02 Published: April 2024 Review date: April 2026