

Hypertension Risk Assessment Tool

ASSESSMENT OF ADULT PATIENTS AT RISK

This tool is designed to support pharmacists in providing a standardised patient–pharmacist conversation flow, helping to identify individuals who may be at risk of developing hypertension. Counselling and education focus on risk factors for hypertension, the importance of regular blood pressure monitoring, lifestyle modifications, and early detection to prevent complications.

Offer the patient a private space to sit and talk

1. IDENTIFY

Common triggers for patient consultation about hypertension*:

- Comorbidities
- Medications
- Symptoms

2. ASSESS

Ask the patient:

- Have you had your blood pressure checked in the past year?
- Has your blood pressure ever been reported as high?
- Do you have a family history of high blood pressure?
- Are you overweight or physically inactive?
- Do you use tobacco products (e.g., cigarettes, e-cigarettes, chewing tobacco)?

3. EDUCATE

Provide education on:

- The asymptomatic or “silent” nature of hypertension, and why early detection is crucial.
- How lifestyle changes, such as improving diet, increasing physical activity, and stopping tobacco use, can significantly reduce blood pressure.
- The **importance of regular medical check-ups and follow-up appointments.**
- The **risks of uncontrolled hypertension**, including heart attack, stroke, and kidney disease, and other serious complications.

Triggers for patient consultation about hypertension risk*



Comorbidities

- Cardiovascular disease (heart disease or stroke)
- Diabetes (high blood sugar)
- Chronic kidney disease
- High risk for cardiovascular disease.



Symptoms

Hypertension is often referred to as a “silent” condition, as most people with high blood pressure are unaware of it due to the absence of noticeable symptoms. In some cases, however, signs such as headaches, dizziness, chest discomfort, blurred vision, ear ringing, or nosebleeds may occur.



Medications

For example, Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors (ACEIs), angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs), beta blockers, calcium channel blockers.

* These are common triggers for patient consultation and do not represent an exhaustive list. For more information on comorbidities, medications, and symptoms, please refer to the hypertension educational guide.

4. REFER

- If the patient appears to be at risk, **recommend that they visit a healthcare provider** for further evaluation.
- Obtain the **patient’s consent to share the Hypertension Primary Care Referral Letter** with the doctor. The referral letter documents your patient assessment and key recommendations. Consider following up with the doctor directly if needed regarding next steps.
- If the patient does not currently have a doctor, encourage them to register with a primary care provider.

5. DOCUMENT

- Use the **Hypertension Patient Information Leaflet** included in the **Hypertension Pharmacy Toolkit** to document your conversation with the patient.
- Review risk factors, provide lifestyle recommendations, and note follow-up actions.
- Sign and date the leaflet and offer a copy to the patient.
- Use this leaflet as a **visual aid during counselling** or provide it afterwards.

Suggested counselling points for at-risk patients

- Encourage regular blood pressure monitoring.
- Educate about the importance of reducing salt (sodium) intake.
- Promote at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.
- Encourage and support patients to stop using tobacco at every opportunity, and signpost them to resources that can help.
- Highlight the benefits of limiting alcohol consumption.
- Discuss stress management strategies and relaxation techniques.
- Advise on the importance of adhering to prescribed treatment, both pharmacological and non-pharmacological.
- Encourage consultation with a pharmacist or physician before using over-the-counter medicines.

Depending on the patient’s profile and needs, consider the following tools to reinforce key counselling points:

- **Lifestyle modification advice** – poster with tailored suggestions on diet, exercise, and lifestyle changes.
- **My hypertension treatment plan** – Supporting medication use and healthy lifestyle changes
- **How to measure blood pressure** – Educating on proper blood pressure measurement technique and interpretation of results
- **Blood pressure monitoring record** – To help patients track daily/weekly BP readings

Hypertension monitoring checklist

In relation to your blood pressure and lifestyle, please answer the following questions:

1. How often do you check your blood pressure at home?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Several times a week

2. Have you missed taking your blood pressure medication in the past 2 weeks?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ 1–2 times
- ☐ 3–5 times
- ☐ More than 5 times

3. Have you experienced any of the following symptoms in the past month? (tick all that apply):

- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Chest pain
- ☐ Dizziness
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Blurred vision
- ☐ Other: _____

4. How often do you consume salty or processed foods?

- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ 1–2 times a week
- ☐ 3–4 times a week
- ☐ Almost daily

5. Do you engage in physical activity (e.g., walking, cycling) for at least 30 minutes?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ 1–2 times a week
- ☐ 3–4 times a week
- ☐ 5 or more times per week

What do your answers mean?

- **Question 1:** Regular home blood pressure monitoring is an important part of managing hypertension. If you rarely check your blood pressure, consider seeking support or setting up a reminder system.
- **Question 2:** Missing doses can lead to poor blood pressure control. If you forget often, consider using tools like pillboxes, setting alarms, or linking medication to a daily routine.
- **Question 3:** These symptoms may be related to high blood pressure. If you have experienced any, it's important to talk to your doctor.
- **Question 4:** Frequent intake of salty or processed foods can raise your blood pressure. Try to limit their consumption and read labels to identify hidden sodium.
- **Question 5:** Regular physical activity helps control blood pressure. If your activity level is low, consider starting with small steps, such as short daily walks.

What can we do to help?

- As your **pharmacist**, we can support you in monitoring your blood pressure.
- We can **help you develop a plan** to take your medications regularly.
- We can support you in making lifestyle changes, including advice on healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco cessation, and stress management.
- We can show you how to properly use a **home blood pressure monitor**.
- If needed, we can **refer you to your doctor** for further evaluation or treatment adjustments.

Identifying common issues in blood pressure management

Pharmacists should be alert to the following issues, which may indicate poor blood pressure control or reduced treatment adherence:

Issues with blood pressure monitoring

- Significant variations in home blood pressure readings (e.g., large differences between morning and evening)
- Irregular or inconsistent self-monitoring
- Difficulties using the device or uncertainty about how to take readings properly

Medication adherence issues in patients already diagnosed with hypertension

Pharmacists should actively explore and address potential non-adherence. Common reasons may include:

- Side effects or fear of side effects
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of understanding about the importance of treatment
- Cost or access to medicines
- Complex medication schedules

Pharmacists should discuss these barriers with the patient and provide appropriate support, such as tailored counselling, reminder tools, simplified regimens (if applicable), and referral to a doctor if needed.