

Using Florence to help manage your blood pressure

Information for service users



You have agreed to take your blood pressure (BP) at home, and send the readings in by text message to the surgery when asked by 'Florence' (or 'Flo' for short), the messaging service.

Please remember that this is an automated service and no-one at the surgery will be looking at your readings every day. If you feel unwell, you should take normal steps to look after yourself. This may include asking for help from health professionals.

You will have a shared management plan agreed with your nurse or doctor, which makes it clear what to do if your BP is higher than normal. Flo supports the advice given in this plan. You will be asked to return the BP monitor once you no longer need it for this programme so that other patients can also benefit from the service.

Your BP reading is two numbers- the pressure when the heart beats and the pressure in between beats. It is usually written for example as: 130/85 mmHg. To send this by phone, you only need to text the numbers but you **must** also text BP, or the computer won't know what the numbers are. So to send in this reading you would put: **BP 130 85**

It doesn't matter if you use capital letters or lower case – Flo will understand; but if you don't put any letters, Flo gets confused.

High BP is usually any reading above 140/90 mmHg, but some people have other medical problems which mean they should aim to keep their BP below 130/80 mmHg. Your doctor or nurse will confirm your goals.

Usually BP readings taken at home are a little lower than when taken at your doctor's surgery but they are as accurate if you take the BP reading as you have been shown.

A few tips:

- Wear loose clothing so that your arm isn't squeezed, and wrap the cuff around the bare skin of your arm
- Use the same arm each time as indicated by your doctor or practice nurse
- Take two readings, and send in the lower
- Don't have a big meal or caffeinated drink, or smoke within 30 minutes before taking BP readings
- Sit calmly for 5 minutes before taking the BP reading; rest your arm on something firm so the cuff is level with your heart
- Don't talk while you are taking your BP.

You may find that certain things you do affect your BP, and that once you understand what these are you can alter your life to avoid some of these pressures.

Flo may send you information about what may help to reduce your BP. Try some of these out, as the more you can do for yourself, the less tablets you are likely to need. Don't alter your tablets without discussing it with your doctor or practice nurse.

Sometimes the tablets you take to help with BP control have side effects, and if you are concerned about these, have a chat with your doctor or pharmacist.

Text messages in the UK to and from Flo are always free. However, in other countries the usual messaging costs apply, so we would strongly recommend you have a break while you're away.

Please take your blood pressure, and send me the readings. Please write BP, followed by each reading, eg: BP 140 80 Thanks, Flo.

You will be asked this question most often. Please give your answer by writing BP followed by the reading on your blood pressure monitor.

Below is what you would write for a blood pressure reading of 142/85 mmHg:

BP 142 85

If you want to stop all messages, text "STOP" to Flo, but if you want a short break from receiving messages, text "HOLIDAY", or "AWAY" and then "HOME" when you want to start again.