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Ambulatory BP Monitoring – Patient Information Sheet

Definition

- Ambulatory blood pressure (BP) monitoring provides more frequent recording of BP during normal activity. The monitor is usually worn for 24 hours. It measures BP 2-3 times/hour during daytime (awake time), and 1-2 times/hour during nighttime (sleep time).

Why the test is performed ?

- Ambulatory BP monitoring can detect abnormal changes in BP that might go unnoticed when it's only measured in the doctor's office. It is a useful way to detect white coat hypertension, masked hypertension, and sustained hypertension.
- This test provides additional information about how changes in your BP may correlate with your daily activities and sleep patterns.
- Ambulatory monitoring may also be useful in evaluating a patient's response to long-acting antihypertensive medications. So doses and times that the medication is given can be adjusted.
- In cases of fainting or dizziness, the test can exclude low blood pressure as a reason.

How the test is performed ?

- The BP cuff will be applied around your upper arm, it connects with a rubber tube to the monitor. This is a small box about 3 by 4 inches in size that can be worn over your shoulder with a strap, attached to your belt, or carried in a large pocket in your clothes.
- At night the cuff is kept on, and the monitor is placed next to you in your bed or under your pillow. You will not be able to take a bath or shower while wearing the cuff and you should not plan to do heavy exercise (that is, exercise to the point where you sweat a lot). Otherwise, you should go about your usual daily activities, including work, household tasks, and so on.
- The monitor will take a reading every 15-30 minutes during the day, and every 30-60 minutes at night but may vary between different clinics. While a reading is being taken, the cuff will inflate and squeeze your arm firmly, just as the blood pressure cuffs used in the office or in stores do. While the cuff is inflating and deflating, it is best to try to avoid moving your arm, as this may interfere with the reading. If the monitor has trouble getting a reading, it may re-inflate in a minute or so to try a second time.
- You will be given a form to keep a diary of: Your symptoms, your activities, any stressful episodes, the times and dosage of any prescription medications you are currently taking, and the time you go to sleep throughout the monitoring period.

How to prepare for the test ?

- Do not drink any coffee or other caffeinated beverages for an hour before coming to the appointment.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing and a waist belt to attach the monitor. The recording monitor will be set up and started by the technician, and you will be given instructions on what to do during and after the monitoring period.
- Continue normal activities while wearing the monitor. Don't avoid stress, work, or exercise. But don't go to the gym or do heavy exercise (that is, exercise to the point where you sweat a lot). A gentle or brisk walk is fine.

How the test will feel ?

- There is no discomfort associated with the test. While a reading is being taken, the cuff will inflate and squeeze your arm firmly, just as the blood pressure cuffs used in the office or in stores do.
- The recording unit is very lightweight, so carrying it usually is not uncomfortable. You must keep the monitor close to the body, either in a pocket or clipped in your belt.
- When sleeping, the cuff is kept on, and the monitor is placed next to you in your bed or under your pillow.

What the risks are ?

- There are no risks associated with the test.

Special considerations

- It is important to let the technician know if you are a **shift worker** so that the correct timing of the measurements can be programmed on the monitor.
- If you have had a **mastectomy** or if you are on **permanent hemodialysis**, inform the technician; this will influence the positioning of the arm cuff.