

Accurately Monitor your Residents for Hypertension

Hypertension puts residents at risk for heart attack, stroke, heart failure, kidney disease or failure, vision loss, sexual dysfunction, angina, peripheral artery disease, and increases risk for falls. Adherence to hypertension guidelines among nursing home patients is important given the high prevalence of hypertension among the elderly and is particularly prevalent in nursing home residents. Most residents with that diagnosis (84%) are being treated with antihypertensive medication.

Despite the availability of well-defined guidelines, only 40–60 percent of the population is prescribed antihypertensive medications by following these recommendations. Given the low rate of adherence, it is estimated that only 30 to 60 percent are at goal blood pressure (BP).

According to the [American Heart Association and American Stroke Association](#), hypertension was classified in the past as a BP reading of 140/90 mm Hg or higher, but the updated guideline classifies hypertension as BP reading of 130/80 mm Hg or higher. However, much consideration must be given to the best BP for each individual resident and changes in BP readings be noted and reported.

Accurate BP Measurement is Essential

As hypertension treatment in residents is being considered and guideline compliance applied, remind staff that the importance of accurate BP reading is critical. Accurate measurement is challenged due to various patient conditions and hectic staff workloads and often proper BP measurement is not the norm. Below are a few key items to encourage staff to consider and be mindful of so accurate readings are documented, and the patient's precise BP readings are monitored for proper monitoring, diagnosis and treatment.

- Proper location of the BP cuff – Position the middle of the cuff on the patient's upper arm at the level of the right atrium (the midpoint of the sternum).
- Having a full bladder – This can add 10-15 points to the resident's BP reading.
- Slouching, unsupported back/feet – Poor support when sitting can increase the residents reading by 6-10 points.
- Unsupported arm – If the arm is hanging by the resident's side or you have to hold it up during a reading, the numbers may be up to 10 points higher than they should be. Position the arm on a chair or counter, so that the measurement cuff is level with their heart.
- Wrapping the cuff over clothing – This common error can add 5-50 points to the reading. Instead, place the cuff on a bare arm.
- Use of proper cuff size – When the cuff is too small, the reading may be 2-10 points higher.
- Sitting with crossed legs – It could increase a BP reading 2-8 points. It's best to have the resident uncross their legs and ensure their feet are supported.
- Talking – Answering questions, talking on the phone, etc. can add 10 points. Ask the resident to stay still and silent to ensure an accurate measurement.
- When repeating the BP readings to ensure a proper measurement, wait 1-2 minutes between each attempt.

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Learn More

Scott Gibson is the Qsource Quality Improvement Advisor for Kentucky. Scott is an expert on quality improvement and offers education on a wide variety of topics, including hypertension management, heart disease, stroke and fall prevention. Please contact Scott by email at scott.gibson@area-G.hcqis.org or by phone at 502-680-2669 to receive free technical assistance. Also available are past articles on other healthcare related issues, such as Composite Scores, immunizations, pain management, and behavioral health strategies.



Scott Gibson

More On atom Alliance

Formed as a partnership between three leading healthcare consultancies, atom Alliance is working under contract to CMS throughout Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee to improve quality and achieve better outcomes in health and healthcare and at lower costs for the patients and communities. Through atom Alliance, AQAF in Alabama, IQH in Mississippi and Qsource in Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee are carrying out an exciting strategic plan, with programs in place to convene, teach and inform healthcare providers, engage and empower patients, and inspire, share knowledge and spread best practices with communities across the entire healthcare continuum. Please visit the [atom Alliance](#) website for helpful educational resources on various topics.

Please, encourage your residents and staff to protect themselves and get the tetanus, pneumococcal, and influenza vaccines!

Resources

1. <https://newsroom.heart.org/news/knowledge-gaps-in-getting-accurate-blood-pressure-reading>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2659159/>
3. https://www.heart.org/-/media/data-import/downloadables/hypertension-guideline-highlights-flyer-ucm_497841.pdf
4. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1525861010000666>

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