

Supporting Your Patients with High Blood Pressure Visit Checklist



Questions to Ask

Consider using these to get a discussion going:

- ▶ What have you been doing since our last visit to control your blood pressure?
- ▶ What concerns you the most about your high blood pressure?
- ▶ What specifically would you like to work on to manage your high blood pressure?
- ▶ How confident are you that you could do [behavior] to help control your blood pressure?
- ▶ What might get in the way or keep you from being successful?
- ▶ What do you think would make it easier to control your high blood pressure?

Million Hearts® is a national initiative to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. It is led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, two agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services.

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Effective provider-patient communication improves health and saves time. Use this checklist as a guide during visits with patients working to control high blood pressure.

- Explain roles of members of the health care team.
- Ask, “What is most important for you to accomplish during your visit today?” The answer helps set the agenda.
- Review blood pressure goal against current reading(s).
- Have an open conversation about goals, achievements, confidence, and barriers. See sidebar for some examples.
- Help set small, achievable goals based on patients’ answers. For example, if the patient is working to improve diet, establish a goal to swap out favorite food items for lower-sodium versions. This can build over time to more heart-healthy meals, cooked at home.
- Use the “Ask-Tell-Ask” technique to address actions for each behavioral goal:
 - **Ask** permission to provide information on a specific topic. For example, for medication adherence, you might say, “There are several things I want to tell you about your new medication. Is that okay?”
 - **Tell** the patient what they need to know (e.g., when they should take the medication, expected side effects, importance of taking it as directed). Use simple words and diagrams or pictures.
 - **Ask** the patient to repeat back the information in his or her own words.
- Provide the patient with the following tools:
 - **Blood pressure tracker** with target numbers written prominently
 - Home blood pressure monitoring instructions—**review this helpful guide**
 - Healthy diet information
 - Community options for exercising
 - Support groups to join
- Remind the patient to record blood pressure readings between office visits and share with the team by phone, fax, or e-mail as well as at the next office visit.

Tools and Resources

- ▶ **American Medical Group Foundation’s Provider Toolkit to Improve Hypertension Control** includes printable assessments for patients around goal-setting and assessing self-management knowledge (see pages 49 and 51).
- ▶ **California Health Care Foundation’s Helping Patients Manage Their Chronic Conditions** guide further discusses the “Ask-Tell-Ask” approach as well as motivational interviewing and goal-setting.
- ▶ Visit the **Million Hearts**® website for more information and resources for helping patients control hypertension.