

As you will be aware, your pregnancy was complicated by a high blood pressure, also known as a Hypertensive Disorder of Pregnancy (HDP). We know that most women with this complication will recover in the coming days, weeks or months. Sometimes you will need the help of our midwives or doctors, or your family doctor (GP) to help look after you during this time.

Unless otherwise advised by the **Royal Hospital for Women (RHW) medical team**, you will be asked to arrange a visit with your GP as follows:

GP follow-up care:

If you are still taking medicine for your blood pressure you will be given a prescription and told how to take your medicines before you leave hospital. Please feel free to ask your midwife, doctor or the ward pharmacist any questions you have about your medicines before discharge.

1. 1 week after birth

Please arrange a visit with your GP for 1 week after you leave hospital. If you don't have a regular GP, you can go to any GP or Medical Centre. Please bring this letter and any medicines you are taking with you to the visit.

- a. The GP will check your blood pressure and adjust your medication. They will continue to see you regularly, every 1-2 weeks until you are stable. Most women are able to stop their treatment within a few months. If you are still on blood pressure medicine 3 months after the birth, or there is still protein in your urine on testing, you may be referred to a specialist.
- b. If you had abnormal blood tests when you left hospital, we may ask your GP to check those again too.
- c. If you have a regular GP, we will have sent them a copy of this letter and your pregnancy history. Please bring this letter to your visit just in case.

2. 6 weeks after birth

- a. All women should see their GP for a general after-pregnancy checkup 6 weeks after having their baby.

3. 6 months after birth:

Research has shown that women who develop blood pressure in pregnancy may have a slightly higher chance of developing high blood pressure, or a heart attack or stroke in the future. However, the overall risk of these problems is still low. We would encourage you to look at ways in which you may be able to reduce your risk of these complications by making changes to your lifestyle. These changes can include exercising regularly, eating a healthy balanced diet, aiming for a healthy weight and not smoking.

It is a good idea to see your GP at 6 months after pregnancy for a complete health check up. This should include checking your blood pressure, your urine for protein and your blood sugar levels. Once you have finished breast feeding, you should have a blood test for cholesterol.

This may also be a good time to discuss with your GP what might happen if you get pregnant again.

4. Will I get blood pressure in my next pregnancy?

If you have had blood pressure in pregnancy you are more likely to have this again in the next pregnancy. You can get information about your own risk and about any other treatment (e.g. taking aspirin), or care that you may need, from your GP or a specialist obstetrician, midwife or physician before you get pregnant again. This should also be discussed with your maternity care provider early in any future pregnancy. This gives you time to begin treatment (usually with aspirin) to help prevent this happening again.

Where can I find support?

Speak to your GP: This will help you review your pregnancy history and make a long-term health plan.

Resources: There are some Australian-based organisations that may provide you with more information and support.

- **Future health after blood pressure in pregnancy**
 - Top 10 Points for Patients from the SOMANZ Hypertension in Pregnancy Guidelines 2023
<https://www.somanz.org/content/uploads/2023/06/Top-10-Points-for-Patients-from-the-SOMANZ-Hypertension-in-Pregnancy-Guidelines-2023.pdf>
- **Healthy Diet recommendations:**
 - NSW Health Get Healthy Service (1300 806 258)
This is a free telehealth coaching service staffed by experts who can help with advice about healthy eating and exercise.
<https://www.gethealthynsw.com.au/>
- **Stopping smoking**
 - NSW Quitline (13 78 48 – 13QUIT):
<https://www.cancer.nsw.gov.au/prevention-and-screening/preventing-cancer/quit-smoking/nsw-quitline>
 - iCanQuit: <https://www.icanquit.com.au/>
- **Mental health support-if you are experiencing anxiety or low mood please speak with your GP or reach out to any of the following services.**
 - **Gidget Foundation** Australia supports the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents.
<https://www.gidgetfoundation.org.au/about/about-us>
 - **Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA) 1300 726 306** –a free perinatal mental health hotline. PANDA offers free telephone support counselling. They also provide information on antenatal and postnatal depression on their [website](#).
 - **Centre of Perinatal Excellence** – an excellent website for all resources related to your mental health after pregnancy
<https://www.cope.org.au/>

A copy of this letter has been provided to give to your GP.