



MEDIA RELEASE

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HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE CAN CUT YOUR LIFE SHORT

Most heart attacks and strokes happen in the morning and if you have high blood pressure when you wake up you are at greater risk.

“Blood pressure varies throughout the day with it being highest in the morning, decreasing slowly during the day and being lowest at night. Physical activity, rest and stress continually affect your blood pressure. This is normal but some people are at greater risk; particularly those with a chronic disease, those who don’t handle stress well, those who don’t lead a healthy lifestyle and the elderly.

Recent studies have also shown that having your blood pressure checked once or infrequently will miss a considerable number of those at risk,” says Professor Geoff Head on behalf of the High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia.

“The best way to diagnose these patients is with [Ambulatory Blood Pressure](#) (ABP) monitoring. This has been available for some time but is not in common usage in Australia. It is broadly acknowledged as being the best way to monitor blood pressure and is found to produce more accurate and reliable results. Australian experts are now advocating it should be used for patients at risk,” concluded Professor Head.

ABP monitoring is particularly useful for diagnosing “white-coat” hypertension and hypertension in pregnancy. It can detect episodic hypertension, masked hypertension, labile blood pressure as well as night and morning hypertension.

Most people have their blood pressure checked at their GPs, often after sitting in the waiting room for some time or rushing in when running late for an appointment. When their BP is checked they are not doing their usual activities and experiencing the norms and stresses of everyday life. This can result in unreliable blood pressure readings.

ABP involves wearing a portable BP device for about 24 hours. It measures your BP (every 15–30min during the day and every 30–60min overnight) automatically via a cuff worn on the upper arm. The readings provide an assessment of the BP during normal daytime activities and importantly during sleep. The measurements are then downloaded to a computer, and a report calculates the number of readings and the amount of time readings are above the hypertension threshold. The information can also be used to calculate a range of signs associated with cardio-vascular risk.

This initiative was developed by the Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring Working Group which is a subcommittee of the High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia (HBPRCA), National Heart Foundation of Australia (NHF) and the National Blood Pressure and Vascular Disease Advisory Committee. It also has been endorsed by both parent groups together with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

May 17 is World Hypertension Day (WHD) and it is time to check your blood pressure to make sure you are not at risk of a stroke or heart attack. People with high blood pressure may not have symptoms and it is important to have it checked regularly. It is a tragedy when the first sign of high blood pressure is a stroke that leaves the victim permanently disabled.

WHD 2012 is promoting *Healthy Lifestyle – Healthy Blood Pressure* and there is a global movement urging people to look at the amount of exercise they do, their smoking habits, diet, amount they exercise and how much alcohol they consume. These are all strong contributing factors to how healthy we are.

The High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia (HBPRCA) is a dynamic group whose national and international members are at the forefront of the blood pressure world. They have been leaders of research into the causes, prevention and treatment of high blood pressure since 1979 and research incorporates the full range from experimental molecular biology and genetics to human physiology and drug treatment of hypertension.

Council is delighted to be hosting Hypertension Sydney 2012, the biennial Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Hypertension in Sydney from 30 September – 4 October 2012.

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