

Medical equipment to monitor your health at home



Having some medical equipment at home will help you to keep an eye on your health and reduce visits to your GP practice.

If you have a long-term condition, for example diabetes, it will also help healthcare professionals to monitor you and give you better advice over the telephone, on a video consultation or by email.

The items suggested below are not available on prescription and will need to be purchased. The exceptions are peak flow machines and glucose strips. Glucose strips can only be prescribed to those who meet the prescription criteria. Prescription charges apply if you are not exempt.

The brands pictured are for guidance and not the ones you have to buy. Try to buy from a trusted website or shop and don't pay more than you can currently afford.

Before buying anything, you could check if your smartphone or other device has any useful health monitoring features.



Blood pressure machine

A blood pressure machine is useful if you

- take blood pressure medication
- suffer from diabetes, heart conditions or respiratory problems
- have suffered a stroke
- are overweight or obese
- when monitoring is recommended by your healthcare professional

OMRON M5 or OMRON M3 are affordable and reliable blood pressure machines.

Check the cuff size fits comfortably on your arm.

Peak Flow machine

A peak flow machine is recommended if you have asthma or suffer from a breathing condition where you have been advised to use a peak flow machine.

It can be prescribed by your doctor. It is useful to keep a diary of your readings to help your GP track and assess your condition.

For more information on peak flows and monitoring go to

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/manage-your-asthma/peak-flow/>





Glucometer and glucose strips

Glucometers and glucose strips are useful if you have diabetes and take medication or if you have been advised to diet or lose weight.

Ask your GP or nurse how many times a day you should check your blood sugar, so that you understand how often and when to carry out this test.

Glucolab and GLucoRx are widely used glucometers in Hounslow.

Before buying, ask your GP practice if you meet the clinical guidelines to have the strips prescribed.

For more information visit <https://www.knowdiabetes.org.uk/know-more/your-blood/blood-glucose/different-ways-to-monitor-blood-sugar-levels/>

Thermometer

Thermometers will help you and your family to spot a fever and check if the temperature is getting better or worse. Modern thermometers will alert you to what is above normal.

You can buy digital, non-contact infrared and forehead thermometers.

Ear thermometers can be used from 3 months onwards in children.





Urine dipstick

Urine dipsticks are useful to have if you often experience problems passing urine or suffer from recurrent cystitis.

It is also useful to test the urine of a child with a fever.

A urine dipstick should be checked for glucose, nitrites, leucocytes and blood.

Pulse oximeter

Pulse oximeters are useful if you suffer from a long-term respiratory condition.

It helps measure the oxygen levels in your blood.

It is also useful for people with COVID-19 symptoms who are concerned about their symptoms worsening.

Always call 999 in an emergency.





Heart beat monitoring machine (electrocardiogram)

If you have a suspected heart rhythm problem called Atrial Fibrillation (AF) and have been advised to monitor your heart throughout the day, you can purchase a personal Electrocardiogram (ECG) which connects to your mobile phone, called AliveCor.

The advantage of having an AliveCor personal ECG at home is that you can use it when you experience palpitations, which can be caused by AF. The ECG can be e-mailed to your GP or consultant as agreed and will help to document abnormal heart rhythm to determine the need for further tests and treatment.

Find out more about the AliveCor ECG on this website: <https://www.alivecor.co.uk/>

Home weighing scales

Having weighing scales at home will help you and your family to keep an eye on your weight.

It will also be useful to your GP when giving you a remote long-term condition check, for example for diabetes, high blood pressure, mental health and other medical conditions.



Hardship fund information

If you are in financial difficulty the funds below may be able to help you buy some medical equipment to keep at home.

1. The Skinners' Benevolent Trust

The Skinners' Benevolent Trust can provide up to £250 for individuals and families to purchase essential household items.

Applications can only be made on behalf of the individual by a support agency - such as social and support services, housing associations, refuge and rehabilitation organisations, and local charities.

The individual must be experiencing one or more of the issues below:

- Experiencing mental health challenges
- In recovery from substance/alcohol use
- A victim of domestic violence
- In receipt of a state retirement pension
- Physical disability or chronic illness
- A family with dependent age children on a very low income

For more information click here: <https://www.skinners.org.uk/sbt/>

2. The Barchester Healthcare Foundation

The Barchester Healthcare Foundation funds:

- Older people 65+
- Adults (18+) with a physical or learning disability
- Adults (18+) with mental health problems

They favour applications that help improve people's mobility, independence and quality of life, grants range from £100 up to £5,000, with the average grant in 2018 being approx. £850.

For more information click here: <https://www.bhcfoundation.org.uk/who-we-fund-2020-focus>

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3. British Red Cross Hardship Fund

The British Red Cross has launched a Hardship Fund to provide financial support for the most vulnerable during the coronavirus crisis.

This fund is aimed at those people not in employment or receiving other financial assistance from statutory/voluntary services either due to having no recourse to public funds (NRPF) or delays in receiving benefits.

The fund provides short term help for people that can't afford the essentials such as food, somewhere safe to sleep and fuel.

People will receive £120 as a one off payment or up to £1,080 over three months for families with children or other dependents.

For more information click here: <https://hardshipfund.redcross.org.uk/>

If you have any questions about this document contact the Hounslow CCG Engagement team by emailing HOUCCG.communications@nhs.net.