CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE

Hypertension in Pregnancy – midwifery care

This document should be read in conjunction with the Disclaimer

Contents

Gestational Hypertension and Pre-Eclampsia : MFAU Quick Reference Guide ........ 2
Pre- Eclampsia – Care on the antenatal ward .......................................................... 5
Gestational Hypertension of Mild / Moderate Pre-eclampsia – Quick Reference Guide Subsequent Care on the Ward ................................................................. 10
Pre-Eclampsia (Severe) ........................................................................................................ 13
Care of the woman with severe pre-eclampsia ............................................................ 14
Pre-Eclampsia (Severe): Care During Labour ............................................................... 19
Key points .......................................................................................................................... 19
MATERNAL OBSERVATIONS ...................................................................................... 19
MEDICATION THERAPY FOR HYPERTENSION AND/OR ECLAMPSIA ........ 22
Anti-HYPERTENSIVE ................................................................................................. 22
MAGNESIUM SULPHATE THERAPY ........................................................................... 22
HYDRAZINE .................................................................................................................. 22
MANAGEMENT FOR A WOMAN WITH ECLAMPSIA ........................................ 22
BIRTH MANAGEMENT ................................................................................................. 22
Third stage management ............................................................................................... 22
Post birth monitoring ..................................................................................................... 22
References ...................................................................................................................... 23
Gestational Hypertension and Pre-Eclampsia: MFAU Quick Reference Guide

CRITERIA FOR REFERRAL
Blood pressure ≥ 140/90mmHg on 2 occasions at least 30 minutes apart +/- proteinuria

ASSESSMENT
The multiple visit sheet (MR 226) is to be used each visit to record the assessment, any test results or treatments given and the plan of management.

1. Assess for the following signs and symptoms. Arrange review by obstetric registrar or above, if any of the following symptoms are present:
   - headache
   - visual disturbance
   - epigastric or right upper quadrant pain
   - significant oedema
   - hyper-reflexia / clonus
   - Intrauterine growth restriction

2. Check the BP 4 times at 15-minute intervals (use K5 disappearance of sounds) and calculate the average BP.
   **Note:** Inform the obstetric registrar immediately if a woman has two BP recordings of ≥160mmHg systolic or > 105mmHg diastolic.

3. Obtain a blood sample for:
   - Biochemistry – creatinine and electrolytes, uric acid, LDH, ALT, AST
   - FBP
   - Blood

4. Obtain an MSU for urinalysis sending a sample to Biochemistry for a spot protein: creatinine ratio where there is proteinuria of +1 or +2. **Proteinuria of magnitude +3 or +4 on dipstick is always abnormal and no laboratory confirmation is required.**

5. If the woman’s gestation is ≥ 30 weeks perform a CTG and ultrasound.

   If the woman is < 30 weeks gestation, arrange an USS only.
6. Arrange **ultrasound assessment** of fetal well-being as follows:
   - First visit - fetal biometry, amniotic fluid index (AFI) and umbilical artery (UA) Doppler studies
   - Subsequent visits – weekly fetal wellbeing assessment, including AFI and UA Doppler and fetal

7. Follow flow chart on page 3 for Assessment of Gestational Hypertension and Pre-eclampsia.

8. New proteinuria of > +2 on dipstick with hypertension in late pregnancy is a sign of severity requiring hospital admission for observation, irrespective of any other test results.

9. IUGR with new hypertension is also an indication for hospital admission and usually reflects severe placental vascular disease.

See the Flowchart on the next page
Flow chart for the management of gestational hypertension and pre-Eclampsia

**Woman presents to Maternal Fetal Assessment unit with suspected Gestational Hypertension or Pre-Eclampsia**

**Midwife/ Resident performs the assessment and establishes mean BP as outlined in the Quick Reference Guide**

**Mean BP ≤ 140/90 mm of Hg and <1+ proteinuria or <25g/L protein**
- **USS +/- CTG**
- **Notify Obstetric Registrar and return to routine antenatal care with referring team or clinic**

**Mean BP ≤ 140/90 mm of Hg and >1+ proteinuria or >25g/L Protein/Creatinin**
- **USS +/- CTG**
- **Obstetric registrar review (can be discharged by level 1 registrar or above)**

**Mean BP 140-160/ 90-99 mm of Hg and >1+ proteinuria or >25g/L Protein/Creatinin**
- **USS +/- CTG**

**Mean BP ≥ 160/100mm of Hg and >1+ proteinuria or >25g/L protein/Creatinin**
- **Review by obstetric registrar. Management to be discussed with**

**Are blood results and fetal well-being assessments normal?**

**YES**
- **Obstetric registrar review. If admission is not arranged, the woman’s management must be discussed with senior registrar or consultant**

**NO**
- **Review by obstetric registrar. Management to be discussed with senior**
Pre- Eclampsia – Care on the antenatal ward

Aims

- To monitor maternal and fetal wellbeing.
- To detect any deterioration in maternal and/or fetal condition in a timely manner such that appropriate action can be instigated to achieve the best possible outcome.
- To reduce maternal and fetal morbidity and mortality.

Key points

- There is no good evidence to support a policy of strict bed rest in hospital for women with mild or moderate pre-eclampsia\(^1\).
- The consultant shall approve the woman’s plan of care and these actions documented\(^2\).
- Women admitted with hypertensive disorders of pregnancy shall be reviewed by a senior registrar or consultant at least daily (including weekends and public holidays)\(^3\).

- Mild to moderate pre-eclampsia can deteriorate quickly to severe pre-eclampsia or eclampsia over a period of hours or days. It is therefore crucial that midwives understand the pathophysiology, investigations, and pharmacological management of pre-eclampsia\(^4\).

- See specific Clinical Guidelines for management of:
  - Severe pre-eclampsia
  - Eclampsia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROCEDURE</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Admission</td>
<td>See antenatal admission for admission procedure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Maternal assessment</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 2.1. **Blood pressure:**

Check manually and record 4 hourly. 

**Clinical Guideline Measuring Blood Pressure**

Notify the medical officer immediately when:

- the systolic BP is \( \geq 160 \) mmHg
- the diastolic BP is \( \geq 105 \) mmHg
- there is a sudden sharp rise in BP
- The reportable BP level recorded in the woman’s medical records is reached.

Regular assessment of BP is required to detect any rise early so that appropriate treatment may be instigated. Automated blood pressure readings may only be considered once the blood pressure is stable.

Although BP recordings of 160/105 are the standard values for notification, a reportable value specific for a woman may be recorded in her notes. It is essential to check each woman’s notes for this value.

### 1.2. **Urinalysis:**

Check and record dipstick proteinuria daily. 

Notify the medical officer of increasing proteinuria.

Increasing vascular damage results in increasing proteinuria. This is indicative of a worsening of maternal condition\(^5\).

### 1.3. **Abdominal Examination**

Inspect the abdomen daily for discomfort or tenderness or pain. 

Report any abnormalities.

Discomfort or tenderness can be a sign of placental abruption\(^6\). 
Upper abdominal pain is highly significant and indicative of HELLP syndrome associated with fulminating (rapid onset) pre-eclampsia\(^5\).
### 1.4. Assess for complications

Assess the woman 4 hourly for, and report immediately any of the following signs and symptoms:\(^5\):

- a sharp rise in blood pressure
- headache which is usually severe, persistent and frontal in location
- drowsiness or confusion
- visual disturbances, such as blurring of vision or blindness
- diminished urinary output ± increase in proteinuria
- upper abdominal pain\(^6\) ± nausea and vomiting
- hyper-reflexia
- sustained clonus

**Note:** Commence CTG immediately if any sudden deterioration of maternal condition or fetal heart rate abnormalities on auscultation.

Any of these signs and symptoms with or without hypertension and proteinuria indicates a worsening of maternal condition and may be indicative of impending eclampsia.

- Headaches, drowsiness and visual disturbances are caused due to cerebral vasospasm.

- Due to renal failure\(^5\)

### 1.5. Maternal laboratory investigations

Discuss with the woman’s medical officer the need for and the frequency of laboratory evaluations (See Clinical Guideline Medical Management—Baseline Assessments).

Reduced kidney perfusion is indicated by proteinuria, reduced creatinine clearance and increased serum creatinine and uric acid\(^5\).

### 2. Fetal assessment

#### 2.1. Fetal movement:

Assess and record 4 hourly. Report any decrease in the amount of fetal movements or any change to the usual pattern of movements.

Pre-eclampsia is associated with reduced maternal placental blood flow. This may result in intrauterine growth restriction and fetal hypoxia manifested by a decrease or change in fetal movements\(^7\).

#### 2.2. Fetal heart rate:

Assess and record BD. Report any abnormalities to the medical officer promptly.

Appraises fetal well being. Fetal heart rate aberrations may indicate fetal distress and a need for further assessment
| 2.3 | **Cardiotocography (CTG)**  
Discuss the frequency of CTGs with the medical officer. | Antepartum cardiotocography is essentially an assessment of immediate fetal condition. Consult Clinical Guideline [Medical Management](#) for KEMH recommended frequency. |
| 3 | **Overnight observations**  
- Check and record maternal and fetal observations 4 hourly. However if the woman is sleeping, and has been stable for 48 hours, omit the 2400 and 0400 observations  
- Observe for signs and symptoms of Pre Eclamptic Angina (PEA). | Pre Eclamptic Angina (PEA) is experienced typically as a severe pain that begins at night, usually maximal in the low retrosternum or epigastrium, constant and unremitting for 1–6 hours. It may radiate or be confined to the right hypochondrium or back. The liver is tender on palpation. The pain may precede the diagnosis of preeclampsia by 7 days or more and may be the only abnormality on presentation such that preeclampsia is not suspected. Recognition of this characteristic symptom will lead to earlier diagnosis of preeclampsia in atypical cases, with the potential to avoid maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality. |
| 4 | **Antihypertensive Therapy**  
Administer antihypertensives as prescribed. | For maintenance treatment the drugs of choice are Methyldopa, Labetolol and Nifedipine. Consult Clinical Guideline [Medical Management](#). |
| 5 | **Corticosteroids**  
If preterm birth between 24 and 36+6 weeks gestation is anticipated, discuss the need for corticosteroid administration with the Medical Officer. | Deterioration in either maternal or fetal condition may necessitate preterm birth. Antenatal corticosteroid therapy substantially reduces neonatal morbidity and mortality in preterm infants through maturation of fetal lungs and through decreasing the risk of intraventricular haemorrhage. |
| 6 | **Education** | |
| 6.2 | Provide information on and discuss the following as appropriate:  
- gestational hypertension and/or pre-eclampsia  
- the woman’s plan of care  
- caesarean section  
- preterm birth  
- Special Care Nursery (SCN)  
- method of feeding  
- ensure MR 212 education is complete | Where there are knowledge deficits, education can improve understanding, reduce anxiety, promote a sense of control and enhance the woman’s ability to cope with the situation.  
Refer to KEMH Breastfeeding Policy |
| 6.3 | Repeat information as needed. Arrange visits to HIRS and SCN | Anxiety interferes with cognitive functioning and the ability to assimilate information. |
| 7. **Social circumstances and support** | Consider referrals to the following specialists and services as appropriate:  
- Aboriginal Liaison Officer  
- Activities coordinator  
- Dietitian  
- Parent Education  
- Physiotherapist  
- Psychological Medicine  
- Neonatologist  
- Social Work  
- Diabetes Educator |  
| 8. **Documentation:** | Ensure Stork data is updated – and baby notes are completed and filed (in a plastic sleeve) at the front of the woman’s medical record behind the MR 004. Baby notes include:  
- Labour and Birth Summary (MR 230.01) name tag in a clear neonatal arm band  
- Neonatal history (MR 410)  
- Care of neonate (MR 425)  
- Vitamin K and Hepatitis B signed consent forms. | Notes are prepared in case of an emergency birth. |
Gestational Hypertension of Mild / Moderate Pre-eclampsia – Quick Reference Guide Subsequent Care on the Ward.

* Full set of observations includes Blood Pressure, Pulse, Temperature, Respiration, O2 Saturation and conscious state

Assessment and care recommended in this guide must be re-evaluated and adjusted if required, in the event of a change in maternal or fetal condition. Document any change.

Maternal Assessment

On Admission
- Full set of observations*, Urinalysis

Blood Pressure
- If Systolic BP ≥160 or Diastolic BP ≥105 record in Pre-Eclampsia section of observation chart.
- Complete a full set of observations

Check for signs and symptoms of complications
- i.e. headaches, visual disturbances, epigastric pain, nausea, drowsiness and confusion.

BD
- Urinalysis- if proteinuria is ≥ 1+
- If proteinuria ≥ 2+ report to medical team

Daily
- Abdominal Examination- Check for discomfort, tenderness or pain.
  - Report abnormalities
- Urinalysis- if proteinuria is ≤ 1+

Overnight
- Check maternal/fetal observations 4 hourly.
  - Observe for signs and symptoms of PEA (Pre-Eclamptic Angina) which is experienced typically at night
Fetal Assessment

4 hourly

Fetal Movement
Report any decrease in movement or change in usual pattern of movements

BD

FHR
Report abnormalities promptly

As ordered

Immediately if there is deterioration in the maternal condition or fetal heart rate.

PROCEDURES TO BE CONSIDERED

Antihypertensive Therapy
Corticosteroids
Maternal laboratory investigations

EDUCATION

Gestational hypertension and/or pre-eclampsia
Plan of care, tests and procedures
Caesarean section
Preterm birth
Special Care Nursery
Breastfeeding
ACTIVITY

No evidence to support bed rest

DOCUMENTATION

MR 285 - Observation Chart
MR 810 - Medication Chart
MR 250 - Progress Notes
MR 410 - Neonatal History Sheet
Baby notes prepared
Perinatal Database record (Stork) updated
Antenatal care Pathway

REFERRALS TO BE CONSIDERED

Aboriginal Liaison Officer
Activities Coordinator
Anaesthetic department
Dietician
Parent Educator
Physiotherapist
Psychological Medicine
Neonatologist
Social Worker
Diabetes Educator
Pre-Eclampsia (Severe)

Background
Pre-eclampsia is pregnancy induced hypertension in association with proteinuria (>0.3g in 24 hours) ± oedema.

Severe pre-eclampsia is variously defined. There is consensus that severe hypertension is confirmed with a diastolic blood pressure (BP) $\geq 110$mmHg on two occasions$^{11}$ or systolic BP $\geq 170$mmHg$^{10,12}$ on two occasions and that, together with significant proteinuria (at least 1g/litre), this constitutes severe pre-eclampsia$^{13}$. Both systolic BP and diastolic BP have been closely associated with fetal outcomes and both are important, however systolic hypertension presents the greatest risk of cranial haemorrhage, and high pressures require emergency medical treatment.$^{15}$

Severe pre-eclampsia (PE) may develop suddenly and is characterised by the following:

| BLOOD PRESSURE | SBP $\geq 170$mm Hg$^{10}$ and/or DBP $\geq 110$mm Hg$^{10}$ |
| SEVERE PROTEINURIA$^{11}$ | $\geq 3+$ of proteinuria on dipstick$^{11}$ on two separate occasions at least 4 hours apart. Note: Preeclampsia can be diagnosed in the absence of proteinuria.$^{10}$ |
| OLIGURIA$^{11}$ | $< 400$ mL of urine in 24 hours. Kidneys that are adequately perfused produce, at minimum, $30$ mL of urine per hour. Observe for decreasing trends in urine output and altered renal function tests. |
| CEREBRAL OR VISUAL DISTURBANCES$^1$ | Headache, blurred vision, scotomata (a permanent or temporary area of diminished sight in the field of vision). |
| IMPAIRED LIVER FUNCTION$^{11}$ | Elevated liver enzymes (AST, ALT & LDH),$^{11}$ severe right upper quadrant and epigastric pain$^{16}$. |
| THROMBOCYTOPENIA$^{11}$ | Platelet count $< 100,000$/ml |
| INTRAUTERINE GROWTH RESTRICTION$^{11}$ | Fetal growth which has deviated from its normal pattern. This is due to a malfunctioning placenta supplying inadequate nutrition to the fetus.$^{17}$ |

HELLP is an acronym that has been applied to a syndrome encompassing haemolysis (H), elevated liver enzymes (EL) and low platelets (LP) and is a form of severe pre-eclampsia.$^{10,11}$
Key points
1. Women with severe PE and/or hypertensive crises shall be managed in Labour and Birth Suite (L&BS) or Adult Special Care Unit (ASCU) and not in a general ward area.\textsuperscript{18}
2. A Consultant or the Senior Registrar shall be notified immediately of the woman’s condition and shall be immediately available.\textsuperscript{18}
3. The Consultant shall approve the woman’s plan of care and these actions shall be documented.\textsuperscript{18}

Care of the woman with severe pre-eclampsia
Severe PE is a multisystem disease associated with a high incidence of complications such as renal failure, hepatic haematoma and rupture, Disseminated Intravascular Coagulopathy (DIC), pulmonary oedema and placental abruption.\textsuperscript{11}
The midwifery care of women with severe PE and HELLP syndrome is the same.\textsuperscript{11}

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<tr>
<td>1. Care shall be provided in a high dependency unit, i.e. ASCU or Labour and Birth Suite.</td>
<td>Severe PE can progress rapidly so that there is a sudden deterioration in maternal and/or fetal condition. Care in a tertiary hospital high dependency unit enables intensive maternal and fetal surveillance. Any deterioration in condition is then detected early and treatment instigated to stabilise\textsuperscript{19}.</td>
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<td>2. Woman shall be “Nil orally”.</td>
<td>Aspiration of stomach contents is said to be a leading cause of maternal morbidity following eclampsia.\textsuperscript{11} As the woman with severe PE is at risk of an eclamptic seizure and of emergency caesarean section, fasting is necessary.</td>
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<td><strong>3.</strong> Insert an intravenous line. Administer IV fluids as per ordered regime. The total IV fluids should not exceed 80mL/hr unless there are other ongoing fluid losses (e.g. haemorrhage)(^{20})</td>
<td>As the woman is fasting intravenous fluids will need to be given to maintain hydration. A second infusion may be required for the administration of antihypertensive and anticonvulsant medication. In the past pulmonary oedema has been a significant cause of maternal death, often associated with inappropriate fluid management.(^ {21}) A fluid restriction regime is associated with fewer complications relating to over-transfusion.(^ {21})</td>
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<td><strong>4.</strong> Close fluid balance with charting of hourly input and output is essential.(^ {21}) A catheter with an hourly urometer is advisable.(^ {22})</td>
<td>Women with severe PE are at increased risk of fluid overload and pulmonary oedema.(^ {10}) If the woman is receiving a magnesium sulphate infusion and the urine output falls to below 20ml/hour, the infusion shall be stopped and the Medical Officer informed.(^ {22})</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> General Observations 1/4 hourly until stable and then every 30 minutes.(^ {22}) Blood pressure, pulse, respiratory rate, and conscious state.</td>
<td>See Clinical Guidelines: <a href="#">Blood Pressure- Measuring</a> and <a href="#">Recognising and Responding to Clinical Deterioration</a>.</td>
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<td><strong>6.</strong> 2 hourly Temperature</td>
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<td><strong>7.</strong> Oxygen saturation Maintain continuous oxygen saturation monitoring with a pulse oximetry.</td>
<td>Acute pulmonary oedema has been a leading cause of pre-eclampsia related maternal mortality in the past.(^ {21})</td>
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<td>8. Deep Tendon Reflexes (DTR)</td>
<td>The evaluation of DTRs is especially important if the woman is being treated with Magnesium Sulphate; absence of DTR is an early indication of impending Magnesium toxicity. Magnesium Sulphate is excreted by the kidneys and is a smooth muscle relaxant. Reduction or loss of tendon reflexes precedes respiratory depression, so reflexes are to be carefully monitored.</td>
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<td>The biceps and patellar reflexes and ankle clonus are assessed and recorded, on completion of the initial loading dose of Magnesium Sulphate and then 2 hourly.</td>
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<td>9. Assess the woman for, and report immediately, any of the following signs or symptoms:</td>
<td>Any of these signs and symptoms, with or without hypertension and proteinuria, indicates a worsening of maternal condition and may be indicative of impending eclampsia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• altered mental state</td>
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<td>• sudden sharp rise in BP or hypertensive episode/s ( ^BP ≥170/110)</td>
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<td>• oliguria, increasing proteinuria</td>
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<td>• persistent frontal headache</td>
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<td>• visual disturbances</td>
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<td>• nausea or vomiting</td>
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**PROCEDURE** | **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**
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10. **Fetal Heart Rate**  
Maintain continuous fetal heart rate monitoring.  
Advise Medical Officer of any abnormalities promptly.  
Continuous fetal monitoring is essential to monitor the effects of hypertension on the fetus. In severe PE the fetus is affected by a restricted placental blood flow resulting in intrauterine growth restriction and hypoxia.  
During labour, uterine contractions further reduce an already impaired oxygen supply making the intrapartum period in the woman with severe PE very hazardous to the fetus.

11. **Antihypertensive therapy**  
Request orders for and administer:  
- Oral Nifedipine  
- Intravenous Labetolol  
- Hydralazine  
- Diazoxide  
  to maintain the BP at a level of $\leq 170$ systolic and/or $\leq 110$ diastolic.  
**Note:** Antihypertensive treatment should be commenced in all women with a systolic blood pressure $\geq 170$ mm Hg or a diastolic blood pressure $\geq 110$ mm Hg because of the risk of cerebrovascular haemorrhage and eclampsia.  
Control of hypertension is necessary to prevent maternal and fetal complications.  
See [Hypertension in Pregnancy: Medical Management](#) for doses and rates of administrations.  
See Clinical Guidelines, Section P Medications A - Z:  
- Nifedipine  
- Hydralazine  
- Diazoxide  
Diazoxide can be obtained from pharmacy (ASCU/EC after hours).
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<th>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>12. Request orders for, and administer:</td>
<td>Magnesium Sulphate is the therapy of choice to control seizures. 23, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>Magnesium Sulphate.</strong> See <a href="#">Complications of Pregnancy: Hypertension in Pregnancy: Magnesium Sulphate Anticonvulsant Therapy</a>.</td>
<td>Magnesium toxicity can be reversed by slow intravenous administration of 10% Calcium Gluconate and nasal administration of oxygen, only if there is a drop in oxygen saturation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Observe for signs of toxicity as stated in the above guideline.</td>
<td>If toxicity is not reversed, respirations must be supported until plasma magnesium levels decrease 26.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
Magnesium sulphate should be considered for women with pre-eclampsia for whom there is concern about the risk of eclampsia. This is usually in the context of severe pre-eclampsia once a delivery decision has been made. 20

| 13. **Corticosteroid therapy** | Deterioration in either maternal or fetal condition may necessitate preterm birth. |
| If preterm birth between 24 and 36+6 weeks gestation is anticipated, seek orders to administer corticosteroids (Betamethasone) to the woman. 20 | Antenatal corticosteroid therapy substantially reduces neonatal morbidity and mortality in preterm infants through maturation of fetal lungs and through decreasing the risk of intraventricular haemorrhage. 27 |
Pre-Eclampsia (Severe): Care During Labour

**Key points**

1. Ensure clotting studies are performed when the platelet count is less than 100 x $10^9$/litre.$^{11}$
2. Confirm the platelet count is more than 100 x $10^9$/litre prior to epidural insertion.
3. Aim to restrict the total fluid intake to 80ml/hour during labour unless there are other ongoing fluid losses (e.g. haemorrhage).$^{20}$
4. The frequencies of maternal observations are adjusted according to the maternal clinical condition and medication therapy guidelines.
5. Monitor the fetal heart rate continuously with a cardiotocography (CTG) during labour.$^{28}$
6. Administer Syntocinon 10 units intramuscular with delivery of the anterior shoulder during the third stage.
7. Avoid the use of Ergometrine or Syntometrine,$^{29}$ as they can exacerbate hypertension and are contraindicated in hypertensive women.$^{15}$

**MATERNAL OBSERVATIONS**

**Blood Pressure (BP) Measurements**

- Measure BP continually during labour$^{20}$ (15 minutely if unstable or hypertensive during labour; otherwise measure half hourly).
- Adjust BP measurements according to maternal clinical condition and use of medication therapy
- If using automated BP machines, these should be calibrated for use in pregnancy and regularly maintained as some can systematically underestimate blood pressure in pre-eclampsia$^{15}$ by at least 10mm Hg,$^{30}$ to as much as 30mmHg.$^{21}$ Additionally, automated BP readings may only be considered once the BP is stable. If using an automatic machine (for frequent BP checks e.g. 15minutely), then initially check with a manual sphygmomanometer for any differences in readings.$^{21}$ Measuring blood pressure manually is still considered the gold standard.$^{31}$
- Cuff size: it is imperative that the appropriate cuff size is used$^{28}$; it is better to use one that is too big than one that is too small.$^{32}$ The length of the bladder should be at least 80% (but less than 100%) of the arm circumference.$^{28}$

**Respiratory rate and Pulse Oximetry**

Observation of the respiratory rate (> 14 /min) will be complimented with pulse oximetry in severe pre-eclampsia; this is a non-invasive measure of the saturation of haemoglobin with oxygen, and gives an indication of the degree of maternal hypoxia.$^{31}$

**Temperature and Pulse**

Monitor temperature and pulse according to management of a woman in labour. See Care of a Woman in the First Stage of Labour.
**Clinical Neurological Assessment**

Monitor and report to medical staff any signs of worsening hypertension or impending eclampsia. These include:

- Headaches
- Visual disturbances
- Examination of optic fundi gives an indication of optic vasospasm and papilloedema
- Hyper-reflexia or the presence of clonus (significant if >3 beats) indicates cerebral irritability
- Epigastric pain and/or vomiting
- Liver tenderness, or upper abdominal pain associated with hepatic involvement
- Drowsiness or confusion due to cerebral vasospasm
- Diminished urinary output with increase in proteinuria

**BLOOD TESTS**

If no current results are available arrange blood tests for:

- Group and hold
- Full blood picture (FBP)
- Liver function tests (LFTs)
- Urea and electrolytes (U&Es)
- Urates
- Coagulation studies (if platelets are <100x10^9/L), or if a current platelet count is unavailable and the woman may require epidural analgesia.

**FETAL SURVEILLANCE**

Monitor the fetal heart rate continuously by cardiotocography (CTG) during labour. Deviations from the normal should be reported and acted upon immediately.

**HYDRATION AND FLUID MANAGEMENT**

- Arrange insertion of an intravenous cannula if it is not already insitu.
- Commence on a liquid diet, and advise the woman this will continue during labour and birth.
- Limit the total fluid intake to 80 mL / per hour, unless there are other ongoing fluid losses (e.g. haemorrhage), to reduce the risk of fluid overload.
- Avoid fluid preloading prior to epidural analgesia when low-dose epidural or combined spinal-epidural analgesia are utilised.
- Monitor and document the fluid intake and output hourly. Insert an indwelling catheter with a Curity bag attached. If the urine output is less than 25mL/ hour (indicating deteriorating renal function) report findings to the resident (RMO)/Registrar on duty. **Oxytocin should be administered with caution as it has an anti-diuretic effect.**
- Perform regular urinalysis (every 4 hours) for proteinuria, ketones, and glucose.
**ANALGESIA**

- Epidural analgesia is an effective analgesia option for use during labour. It assists with BP control, and the use is associated with improved renal and uteroplacental blood flow. It facilitates rapid caesarean section should the need arise.

- Ensure a normal clotting screen and a platelet count (>100 x10⁹/L). If epidural analgesia is contraindicated due to coagulopathy, sepsis or severe thrombocytopenia then the option of intravenous patient-controlled analgesia may be suitable. Consider arranging an early anaesthetic consultation regarding analgesia requirement for women who may not be suitable for epidurals.

- Notify Theatre Co-ordinator and On-call Anaesthetist when a woman with severe PE is in labour.
MEDICATION THERAPY FOR HYPERTENSION AND/OR ECLAMPSIA

Anti-HYPERTENSIVE
Continue the use of antenatal antihypertensive medication during labour.\textsuperscript{20, 28}

MAGNESIUM SULPHATE THERAPY
Magnesium sulphate is the anticonvulsant drug of choice as it halves the risk of eclampsia, and probably reduces the risk of maternal death.\textsuperscript{23, 25}
See:
- \textit{Magnesium Sulphate Anticonvulsant Therapy}
- \textit{Labour and Birth Suite – Quick Reference Guide Magnesium Sulphate Anticonvulsant therapy.}

HYDRALAZINE
See:
- \textit{Clinical Guideline Hydralazine Antihypertensive Therapy}
- \textit{Clinical Guideline Quick Reference Guide Hydralazine Antihypertensive Therapy.}

MANAGEMENT FOR A WOMAN WITH ECLAMPSIA
See: \textit{Clinical Guideline Management of the Women with Eclampsia}

BIRTH MANAGEMENT
- The length of the second stage is determined by the fetal and maternal clinical condition. If the woman’s blood pressure is controlled within target ranges, then a normal duration of second stage (including pushing) may occur.\textsuperscript{20} An assisted delivery may be required to hasten delivery, or used to avoid maternal exertion.\textsuperscript{31}
- Arrange for a paediatric doctor to be present for the birth.\textsuperscript{21} See \textit{Clinical Guideline Quick Reference Guide Paediatrician attendance for at Risk Births.}
- If the woman is ‘high risk’ for caesarean section discuss the option of anti-emetics during labour with the Obstetric Team and the Anaesthetist. See: \textit{Clinical Guideline Prevention of Gastric Aspiration in Obstetrics}

Third stage management
Administer Syntocinon 10 units intramuscular with the birth of the anterior shoulder.
\textbf{Note: Avoid the use of Ergometrine or Syntometrine} as it can exacerbate hypertension.\textsuperscript{15, 28, 29}

Post birth monitoring
Transfer the woman to the Adult Special Care Unit after birth for monitoring, until her condition is stable.\textsuperscript{28}
The decision for postnatal transfer is made in liaison with the Obstetric and Anaesthetic Consultants.
References


Related WNHS policies, procedures and guidelines

Hypertension in Pregnancy Medical Care

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