



## Lesson Plan: Taking a Patient's Blood Pressure and Pulse

### Teacher Notes

**Topic:** Taking a patient's blood pressure and pulse

**Timing:** 40–60 minutes

**Lesson type/focus:** vocabulary, reading, listening and speaking

**Aims:**

- **Speaking:** discuss and practise language for blood pressure and pulse
- **Vocabulary:** learn/review equipment used for blood pressure and pulse
- **Reading:** read for specific information
- **Listening:** listen for gist and detail

### Overview

The focus of this lesson is talking about blood pressure and pulse readings and the equipment used. The speaking activity introduces the topic and gives students the opportunity to share their ideas and experience. The vocabulary activity introduces/reviews key vocabulary which appears in the listening activity that follows. The listening activity also provides a model for the final speaking activity.

**Note:** This lesson supports the language introduced in the following:

- Course: '[English for Care](#)'
- Unit: 'Patient admission'
- Module: 'Taking patient observations: hospital charts: early warning score' pages 9 to 14



## Teaching Guide & Answer Key

### Part 1: speaking

Put students into small groups and ask them to discuss questions 1 and 2 on the student worksheet. Encourage them to share examples from their own experience.

Do whole class feedback to discuss and share answers.

### Suggested answers

1. Have you ever taken a person's blood pressure and pulse before?

*Students' own answers.*

2. What equipment do you use to take a blood pressure reading and a pulse reading?

*Equipment is either digital equipment (electronic) which takes both readings or manual equipment (sphyg and stethoscope) for BP reading and fingertips for pulse.*

### Part 2: vocabulary

A. Have students work individually to write the terms below the pictures.

Go through the answers as a class.

### Answers

*1. radial pulse 2. blood pressure monitor 3. sphygmomanometer  
4. stethoscope*

B. Have students work individually to complete the sentences. Then ask students to check their ideas with a partner.

Go through the answers as a class.



## Answers

1. *electronic*
2. *pulse*
3. *blood pressure reading*
4. *wrist*
5. *cuff*
6. *bulb*
7. *sounds*
8. *gauge*

C. Have students work individually, or in pairs, to write the terms next to the pictures. Point out that only six terms are needed and these come from the answers in activities A and B.

Go through the answers as a class.

## Answers

1. *gauge*
2. *cuff*
3. *stethoscope*
4. *bulb*
5. *blood pressure reading*
6. *pulse (reading)*

## Additional information

digital reading	using a blood pressure machine to give a BP and pulse reading
manual reading	using a sphygmomanometer and stethoscope for a BP reading and the tips of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> fingers placed over the radial pulse at the wrist. The pulse is felt under the fingertips and counted for at least 30 seconds and doubled, or for a full 60 seconds.
sphygmomanometer	usually abbreviated to <i>sphyg</i> ; a type of manometer (instrument that measures the pressure of a fluid or gas)
gauge	any instrument which measures the amount of something, e.g. a pressure gauge
radial pulse	one of the pulse areas of the body at the wrist where the radial artery is located
cuff	inflatable band wrapped around the upper arm when taking a blood pressure reading
bulb	inflatable, hollow rubber device which is used to pump air into the cuff to inflate it

## Part 3: reading

Have students work individually to choose True or False for the sentences. Then ask students to check their ideas with a partner.

Go through the answers as a class.

**Answers**

1. True 2. False (systolic) 3. False (top number is higher) 4. False (over)  
5. False (one) 6. True

**Part 4: listening**

A. ◀ Tell students they are going to watch/listen to a conversation between a patient and carer taking blood pressure and pulse readings. Play video - either with students watching or listening. Have students work individually to number the notes (1–6) while they listen to the audio.



Go through the answers as a class.

**Answers**

4	<i>blood pressure a bit high</i>
6	<i>report to nurse</i>
1	<i>check blood pressure and pulse</i>
2	<i>hold out your arm</i>
5	<i>pulse a bit fast</i>
3	<i>wrap cuff around your arm</i>



B. ◀ Have students watch/listen to the conversation again and answer the questions.

### Answers

1. 150/79 2. 84 3. BP is a bit high, pulse is a bit fast

**Extension:** You could have answer these additional questions when they listen to the audio.

1. What does the patient say his blood pressure is usually like? *It's usually OK.*
2. Is Mr Browne's blood pressure the same as it usually is? *No, it is a bit high.*
3. Is Mr Browne's pulse all right? *No, it is a bit fast.*
4. What does the patient say his pulse is usually like? *It's usually slower than 84.*

### Part 5: speaking

A. Have students work in pairs to use the pictures of blood pressure and pulse readings for controlled speaking practice. Set up the activity and then have them swap pictures and repeat. Monitor and check pronunciation.

Go through the answers as a class.

Student A: look at monitors 1 and 2.

Student B: ask *What's the patient's blood pressure? What's the patient's pulse?*

Student A: give the readings

Student B: write down the readings

Student B: look at monitors 3 and 4.

Student A: ask *What's the patient's blood pressure? What's the patient's pulse?*

Student B: give the readings

Student A: write down the readings



## Answers

<i>Monitor 1: BP 133/93</i>	<i>P 111</i>
<i>Monitor 2: BP 129/88</i>	<i>P 72</i>
<i>Monitor 3: BP 117/72</i>	<i>P 65</i>
<i>Monitor 4: BP 141/75</i>	<i>P 91</i>

## B.

1. Have students work in pairs to complete the dialogue with the correct words. Listen to the audio again if students need help, or to check the answers when they've finished.

Go through the answers as a class.

## Answers

*1. check 2. hold out 3. wrap 4. a bit 5. reading 6. over 7. gone up  
8. heart rate 9. slower 10. report*

2. Explain the role play and have students work in the same pairs to practise it. Have them swap roles and practise again.

Listen to the conversations noting down examples of good language use and any errors. Go through any examples after the discussion.

You could ask some of the pairs to perform their role plays for the class.

## Transcript

**Carer:** Can I check your [blood pressure] and pulse, Mr Browne?

**Patient:** My blood pressure? Oh yes. That's OK.

**Carer:** Can you hold out your [arm], please.

**Patient:** OK.

**Carer:** I'm going to wrap the blood pressure [cuff] around your arm. It will be a bit tight.

**Patient:** Mm, yes, it is tight.

**Carer:** It's OK. Your blood pressure [reading] is ready now.



**Patient:** Is it all right?

**Carer:** It's 150 over 79. That's a bit [high]. What's it usually like?

**Patient:** It's usually OK. I'm not sure why it's gone up.

**Carer:** Let me check your pulse now. Hmm. Your pulse is 84. It's a bit [fast]. Is your heart rate usually as fast as that?

**Patient:** I don't think so. No, my pulse is usually slower than that. Is it serious? What are you going to do?

**Carer:** Don't worry too much. I'll report it to the [nurse] right now. I may have to check it again in a little while. It should be OK then.

# Student Worksheet: Taking a Patient's Blood Pressure and Pulse

## Part 1: speaking

Discuss questions 1 and 2 with your group.

1. Have you ever taken a person's blood pressure and pulse before?
2. What equipment do you use to take a blood pressure reading and a pulse reading?

## Part 2: vocabulary

A. Match the term related to taking blood pressure and pulse to the correct picture (1–4). Write the words under the picture.

blood pressure monitor    radial pulse    sphygmomanometer    stethoscope

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b></p>
<p>1. _____</p>	<p>2. _____</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b></p>
<p>3. _____</p>	<p>4. _____</p>



B. Read the sentences about taking blood pressure and pulse and look at the words in the box. Write the correct word to complete the sentences.

blood pressure reading   bulb   cuff   electronic   gauge   pulse   sounds   wrist

1. A blood pressure monitor is an \_\_\_\_\_ device which is used to take a patient's blood pressure and pulse.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ is a measurement of the number of times a heart beats every minute.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ has two parts; the top one is the systolic and the bottom one is the diastolic.
4. A patient's pulse can be felt by placing the second and third fingers over the radial artery at the \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ is wrapped around the top of the arm to cut off the blood supply to the arm.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ is used to inflate the sphygmomanometer before taking a reading.
7. A stethoscope is placed over the inner elbow to listen to the \_\_\_\_\_ of blood flow after the cuff is released.
8. Sphygmomanometers have a \_\_\_\_\_ where the blood pressure reading can be read.

C. Look at the pictures and write words from A and B next to the correct item (1–6).



1.  
\_\_\_\_\_

2.  
\_\_\_\_\_

3.  
\_\_\_\_\_

4.  
\_\_\_\_\_



5.  
\_\_\_\_\_

6.  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Part 3: reading

Read the text about blood pressure and pulse readings. Decide if the statements are True or False.

#### Blood pressure and pulse readings

When talking about a blood pressure reading, we use two numbers. The top number is called the *systolic* (the pressure of the blood being pushed out of the heart) and the bottom number is called the *diastolic* (the pressure of the heart when it relaxes between beats). The systolic number is higher than the diastolic number.



Blood pressure readings are said as the two readings with *over*, e.g. *one hundred and twenty over eighty*, and written using a forward slash 120/80.

When talking about a pulse reading, we use a number of beats per minute: beats/minute.

Pulse readings are usually said as the number only, e.g. seventy-two. It is understood that this means 72 beats per minute. The pulse may be written as P72 (P=pulse) or HR 72 (HR=heart rate).

1. A blood pressure reading has two numbers. True/False
2. Pressure of the blood going out of the heart is called *diastolic*. True/False
3. The bottom number is higher than the top number. True/False
4. We say a blood pressure reading using the word *slash*. True/False
5. A pulse reading has two numbers. True/False
6. Another word for pulse is *heart rate*. True/False

#### Part 4: listening

A. 📌 You're going to hear a conversation between a carer and a patient. Listen and number the notes (1–6) in the order you hear them.

	blood pressure a bit high
	report to nurse
	check blood pressure and pulse
	hold out your arm
	pulse a bit fast
	wrap cuff around your arm

B. 📌 Listen again and answer the questions.

1. What is the patient's blood pressure?
2. What is the patient's pulse?
3. What is unusual about the patient's blood pressure and pulse?

## Part 5: speaking

A. Work with a partner. Practise giving blood pressure and pulse readings and writing them down.



Monitor 1: BP

P

Monitor 2: BP

P



Monitor 3: BP

P

Monitor 4: BP

P



B.

1. You are going to work with a partner and practise the conversation from the listening section. Before you start, work together to complete the dialogue using the words in the box. You can listen again if you need to.

a bit   check   fast   heart rate   gone up   hold out   over   reading  
report   slower  
wrap

**Carer:** Can I (1) \_\_\_\_\_ your blood pressure and pulse, Mr Browne?

**Patient:** My blood pressure? Oh yes. That's OK.

**Carer:** Can you (2) \_\_\_\_\_ your arm, please?

**Patient:** OK.

**Carer:** I'm going to (3) \_\_\_\_\_ the blood pressure cuff around your arm. It will be (4) \_\_\_\_\_ tight.

**Patient:** Mm, yes, it is tight.

**Carer:** It's OK. Your blood pressure (5) \_\_\_\_\_ is ready now.

**Patient:** Is it all right?

**Carer:** It's 150 (6) \_\_\_\_\_ 79. That's a bit high. What's it usually like?

**Patient:** It's usually OK. I'm not sure why it's (7) \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Carer:** Let me check your pulse now. Hmm. Your pulse is 84. It's a bit fast. Is you r (8) \_\_\_\_\_ usually as fast as that?

**Patient:** I don't think so. No, my pulse is usually (9) \_\_\_\_\_ than that. Is it serious? What are you going to do?

**Carer:** Don't worry too much. I'll (10) \_\_\_\_\_ it to the nurse right now. I may have to check it again in a little while. It should be OK then.

2. Practise the conversation together. Decide who is going to be the carer and who is going to be the patient. Then swap roles and practise again.