



Healthy Blood  
Pressure



Stop Smoking



Safe Drinking



Healthy Mind



Healthy Weight

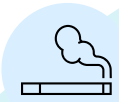
# Vital 5 check

A guide for South East London Primary Care (Adult)

## Key messages

1. The Vital 5 are five of the most important things we can change to improve our health
2. A Vital 5 Check helps people discover their Vital 5 results and learn how to stay healthier for longer
3. This guide can be used by anyone, clinical or non-clinical
4. You can use just one page, but ideally all 5 connected areas should be covered

Always work within your knowledge and competency



Stopping smoking is one of the single most important changes anyone can make

## Stop Smoking

Smoking harms both physical and mental health



### Just ask

Just asking one question can motivate change  
Very brief advice works!

The Vital 5 check has been specifically designed to reach communities living with deprivation

For patients from cultures where abstinence is the norm, it can be more difficult to discuss alcohol openly



## Safe Drinking

Even providing simple alcohol advice can result in significantly reduced drinking and health improvement

Mental health problems worsen physical health problems and vice versa



## Healthy Mind

Mental health problems are very common (affecting one in four each year)

Patients from some cultures may find it more of a challenge to discuss mental health openly

Most people welcome being asked about their mental health



Around two thirds of adults in SEL are overweight or living with obesity, and this is increasing

## Healthy Weight

Black ethnic groups in SEL have the highest levels of living with obesity



### What are the Vital 5

They are 5 of the most important things we can change to improve our health

Thousands across South East London (SEL) have already benefited from a Vital 5 check

## Why the Vital 5 are important

Problems in all Vital 5 areas can be **reduced and often prevented** with the right support

### Younger people

Ages 35 to 55 years are when the Vital 5 can have the greatest impact on longer term health. Finding a problem and acting on it is therefore especially important at these ages



### Healthcare is unfair

For people from ethnic minority backgrounds and lower socioeconomic groups, we know less about their V5 and so are less likely to offer help



### Interconnected

Vital 5 are all linked: for example, people with mental illness have higher rates of high blood pressure, smoking and living with obesity

Checking the Vital 5 helps to get a sense of someone's overall health and wellbeing

High blood pressure is the leading cause of early death in SEL (and also of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and dementia)



## Healthy Blood Pressure

Black African or Caribbean patients are more likely to have high blood pressure, and less likely to have it well controlled

## How to use this guide

In this box on each page, we make suggestions for opening questions - these are suggestions only and may sound better if you adapt to use you own words and phrases

### Opening the check

- A **positive introduction** can encourage positive change. You could ask: *"When was the last time you took some time to focus on your overall health and wellbeing?"*
- Consider sharing some of the **information** from page 2 'Why the Vital 5 are important'
- Share that *"thousands of people have already participated in the Vital 5 check"*
- Patients have told us that having an **open and supportive** conversation is important: thank and congratulate where appropriate; acknowledge the patient's feelings
- Encourage the patient to have all 5 topics checked
- People have told us it is important to take away something they are familiar with. **Show them the [Vital 5 patient website](#) and text them a link** to look at later

**ASK**

Brief opening and/or taking measurements

**ASSESS/  
ASSIST**

Explore in more detail

**The questions are treatment** in themselves. **Just asking** these questions can help patients move in a healthier direction

**ACT**

#### Low risk/ concern

Offer preventative education

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

#### Medium risk/ concern

Signpost relevant service  
Show sources of info

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

#### Higher risk/ concern

Refer to clinical service  
Discuss with clinician

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

### Closing the check

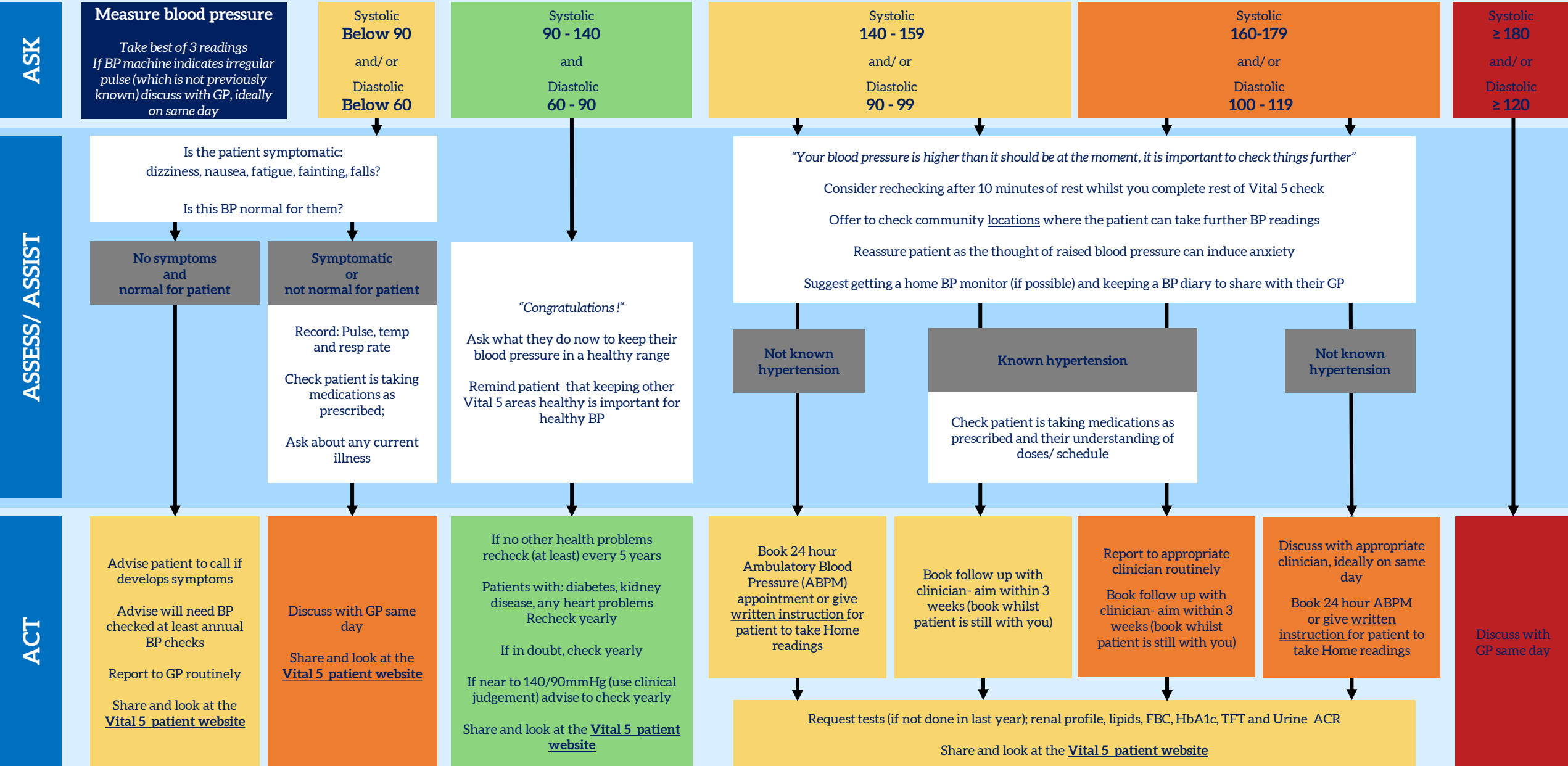
See **page 9** for details on this important final step  
Please use the quick **Vital 5 template** to record important points



# Healthy Blood Pressure (BP)

"Did you know that high blood pressure is one of the leading causes and death and illness in our community, and this is preventable with the right treatment?"

"One of the challenges is that high blood pressure does not causes symptoms, so we may not know about it until it causes a problem"



# Stop Smoking

"We're seeing that more and more people in the community quit smoking"  
"Quitting is beneficial at any time, no matter how long you've smoked, but the sooner the better"

ASK

"Do you smoke?"

Yes

"I'd like to ask you a few questions about your smoking, is that ok?"

Yes

"Would you like help giving up?"

Yes

"What do you smoke:  
Just tobacco, or tobacco and vapes/ e-cigarettes?"

No

Do you vape?

Yes

No

No

No

ASSESS/ ASSIST

## Only ever vaped

"Well done for not smoking"

"Vaping is far safer than smoking but still carries risks"

## Use to smoke now only vapes

"Vaping is much less harmful than smoking, so well done on the positive change you have already made"

"It is important not to go back to smoking"

## Currently low motivation to talk or stop

"It's your choice of course, help will always be available"

"Just to let you know, more and more people in the community are smoke-free"

If you want to join them in the future, here are some resources and contact numbers"

## Smokes and vapes

"Did you know, you're more likely to stop smoking with a combination of specialist support and medication or e-cigarettes?"

"I can refer you to our local stop smoking service that many of my patients have found useful"

"Vaping is much less harmful than smoking, what would motivate you to move to vaping all the time?"

"Stopping smoking completely would be very beneficial to your health"

## Smokes Tobacco

"Did you know, you're more likely to stop smoking with a combination of specialist support and medication or e-cigarettes?"

"I can refer you to our local stop smoking service that many of my patients have found useful"

"What would encourage you to give up?"

"Why do you think it wasn't successful in the past? What would you need in place to help you give up?"

"What would you do with the extra money you save from quitting smoking?"

## Discloses smoking other substances

ACT

Congratulations!  
Go to next Vital 5 topic

Patient Information about [Vaping \(Frank\)](#)  
Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

"You can ask at any time for help giving up"

**Stop Smoking London:**  
0300 123 1044  
stopsmokinglondon.com

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

"You can speak at any time to a healthcare professional for help giving up"  
If patient expresses an interest in immediately starting Nicotine replacement therapy, report to appropriate clinician routinely and ideally book follow up appointment

Suggest referral to [Borough specific stop smoking services](#)

**Stop Smoking London:**  
0300 123 1044  
stopsmokinglondon.com

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

If a patient spontaneously reveals they smoke substances other than tobacco, you may want to discuss with appropriate clinician

Offer referral [Borough specific drug services](#) if appropriate/ requested

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

# Safe Drinking

"You don't have to be getting drunk or binge drinking to put your health at risk"  
 "Even a small reduction in the amount of alcohol you're drinking can make a difference to your overall health and wellbeing"

ASK

"I'd like to ask you a few questions about your alcohol intake. Is that ok?"

Yes

"How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?"	Score	"How many units do you drink on a typical day when you are drinking?"	Score	"How often have you had 6 or more units (female), or 8 units or more (male), on a single occasion in the last year?"	Score
Never	0	0 to 2	0	Never	0
Monthly or less	1	3 to 4	1	Less than monthly	1
2 to 4 times per month	2	5 to 6	2	Monthly	2
2 to 4 times per week	3	7 to 9	3	Weekly	3
4 or more times a week	4	10 or more	4	Daily or almost daily	4

No

"Ok. Feel free to ask for help any time"  
 Consider sharing resources below

**Points to consider**

- Be aware of cultural differences in drinking habits
- Be aware you may have a personal bias against overuse of alcohol
- Treat patients kindly and do not judge them when discussing alcohol
- Recommended weekly limit is 14 units- [unit calculator](#)

Totalled score			
0-4 Low Risk (go to green)	5-7 Increased Risk	8-10 Higher Risk	11-12 Possible dependance

ASSESS/ ASSIST

**Thank patient for sharing and encourage to think about change**

"how do you feel about your drinking, does it negatively affect your life?"

Explore understanding of problems with high alcohol use: diabetes, cancers, mental health, obesity and liver damage, sleep disturbance

Give example of one strategy a patient can employ to reduce the amount of alcohol they drink, using other people as examples

No

"Are you open talking to someone to help reduce your risk?"

Yes

ACT

Congratulate patient  
 Ask what they do to keep it to healthy level and acknowledge the response

"Ok. Feel free to ask for help any time"  
 If requested, signpost [Borough specific alcohol services](#)  
 Give a positive reason to reduce their alcohol  
 Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

Offer appointment with relevant Healthcare Professional  
 If requested, signpost [Borough specific alcohol services](#)  
 Give a positive reason to reduce their alcohol  
 Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

Suggest appointment with relevant Healthcare Professional  
 Offer referral to [Borough specific alcohol services](#)  
 Give a positive reason to reduce their alcohol  
 Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

Book appointment with relevant Healthcare Professional  
 Suggest referral to [Borough specific alcohol services](#)  
 Give a positive reason to reduce their alcohol  
 Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)



# Healthy Mind

*"Wellbeing has a massive impact not just on our minds, but also on our bodies and our general wellbeing"*

Assure the patient about confidentiality and that this is a safe space. Encourage the patient to be as open as possible to receive the most accurate results

ASK

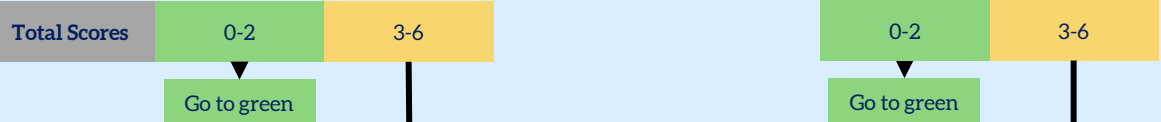
**"I'd like to ask you a few questions about your wellbeing and mental health. Is that ok?"**

Yes →

"Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?"	PHQ-2		GAD-2	
	Little interest or pleasure in doing things	Feeling down, depressed or hopeless	Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	Not being able to stop or control worrying
Not at all	0	0	0	0
Several days	1	1	1	1
More than half the days	2	2	2	2
Nearly every day	3	3	3	3

No  
↓  
"Ok. Feel free to ask for help any time"

Consider sharing resources as below



ASSESS/ ASSIST

## Acknowledge and encourage

*"Thank you for sharing, and it is good that this has been picked up today. Would you like some help?"*

You could ask additional questions such as - "How do you look after yourself?" or - "What support do you have in place?"

Acknowledge any difficulties. Show relevant section of [Vital 5 website](#), including self-referral guidance to talking therapies or GP and crisis information

Inform them that there is much more help available for them if they would like to speak with someone, and give them a few options using [Vital 5 website](#), or help them book an appointment with an appropriate clinician

If they have an existing relationship with a mental health service, they may be best placed to support them

ACT

*"Thank you for doing this assessment. Please reach out for support anything changes or if you need it"*

*"I can share some resources that you can keep for future reference."*

- Wellbeing resources- self accessed
- [Every Mind Matters](#): expert advice and practical tips
- [Good Thinking](#): Interactive Help for Londoners
- [Mind](#) has a range of self help resources

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

## Mental health concerns

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

*"You can access urgent or routine help from our GP surgery at any time. Out of hours please call 111"*

### Wellbeing resources - self accessed

- [Every Mind Matters](#): expert advice and practical tips
- [Good Thinking](#): Interactive Help for Londoners
- [Mind](#) has a range of self help resources

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

### Talking therapies - self referral

[Local talking therapies](#)

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

### Primary care

Some patients may wish to see their GP in the first instance. If so, help patient to book appointment with appropriate clinician

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

## Significant Mental health concerns

If you have significant or immediate concerns discuss with GP on same day

### Crisis lines

- South London and Maudsley – 0800 731 2864 (Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark)
- Oxleas - 0800 330 8590 (Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich)

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

# Healthy weight

"I know talking about weight can be sensitive, thanks for agreeing to speak to me about it"  
 "Most weight problems are caused by a mixture of things - what do you think could be causing issues for you?"

Calculating Body Mass index (BMI):  

$$\frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (m)} \times \text{Height (m)}}$$

## Measure height and weight and calculate BMI

### You may like to acknowledge

Healthy eating advice does not take into account culture or lifestyle habits  
 BMI doesn't take into account body shape or build but high BMI can have negative health consequences (like diabetes and heart disease)

ASK

BMI 18.4 and below

BMI (white ethnicity) 18.5 – 24.9  
 BMI (South Asian, other Asian, Middle Eastern, Black African or African-Caribbean family background) 25 – 22.9

BMI (white ethnicity) 25 – 29  
 BMI (South Asian, other Asian, Middle Eastern, Black African or African-Caribbean family background) 23 – 27.4

BMI (white ethnicity) 30 – 39.5  
 BMI (South Asian, other Asian, Middle Eastern, Black African or African-Caribbean family background) 27.5 – 37.5

BMI (white ethnicity) >40  
 BMI (South Asian, other Asian, Middle Eastern, Black African or African-Caribbean family background) > 37.5

ASSESS/  
ASSIST

Ask about weight history: sudden or unplanned loss? Normal weight of them?  
 Ask about lifestyle factors such as diet and medical conditions

Does the patient have additional risk?  
 Recent onset type 2 diabetes (T2DM) (within last 2 years)  
 BMI >35 with T2DM or 2 or more of: T2DM, Heart disease, Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA), high cholesterol

**Further assessment**  
 Ask about their usual diet and lifestyle  
 "Do you think your weight affects your health?"  
 Calculate QRisk3 (if applicable) : If QRisk >10% and not on a statin, offer to help patient make a routine appointment with appropriate clinician  
 Request tests (if not done in last year); HBA1C, Cholesterol

ACT

Offer routine appointment with appropriate clinician  
 Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

Congratulate patient on healthy weight  
 Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)

Offer routine appointment with appropriate clinician to consider referral: **Tier 2 or 'Up! Up!'**

Make routine appointment with appropriate clinician to consider referral: **Tier 2 or 'Up! Up!'**

Make routine appointment with appropriate clinician to consider referral: **Tier 3**

Offer the following intervention options to the patient

- Download the free NHS Weight Loss Plan 12 week plan
- The [NHS Digital Weight Management Programme](#) for adults who have T2DM or hypertension: 12 week course
- Refer to Practice social prescribing team or health and wellbeing coach
- Silverfit physical activity for older people
- Signpost other local resources via [Mecc Link](#)

Share and look at the [Vital 5 patient website](#)



## Closing the check- an important final step

### Congratulate and thank

Closing a health check well can really help to encourage lasting change. **Congratulate** the patient for **taking part and for doing something positive** for their long-term well-being

### Summarise and highlight

**Summarise** the results of the check and **record them** using the Vital 5 EMIS template  
Using the [Vital 5 website](#) as support, **draw attention** to results that may need addressing

### Show the Vital 5 patient website

The [Vital 5 patient website](#) includes detailed information, tips and further resources  
Show the patient the website and if possible read any pages of interest with them. Send (via Accurx) the link so they can look again in their own time. The website can be used as a prompt for conversation in each 'ACT' section.

### Identify the patient's priorities

Ask patient **which Vital 5 area is their main concern**, and explore their options for helping this (use the [Vital 5 website](#) as support). Ask what **commitment** they could make to themselves in this area and **support** them in this

Look up on [Vital 5 website](#) the available services and agree which they'd like to consider

Use Behaviour change tips to help make lasting change

### Share your priorities with the patient

Share any results that **you are concerned about**, especially if they were not identified as a patient priority. Explain why you are concerned and discuss options for addressing it

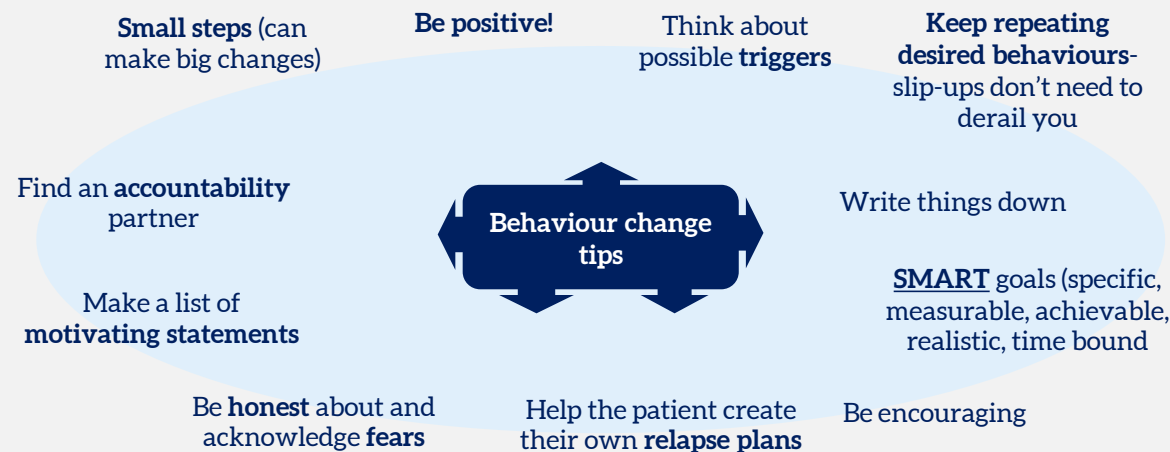
**Ensure any urgent outcomes are shared and addressed**

### Empower the patient

Finally ask the **how will today's conversation help them be in charge of their own health?**  
"What one simple thing can you commit to changing today?"

### Record the information

Please use the quick **Vital 5 template** to record important points



### Help closing a difficult conversation

You may find the needs of the patient feel **outside of your scope** of expertise or personal capacity. You could use the following language to safely close the conversation:

*"I think you may need to speak to a different member of the team to help you with some of the important information you're sharing with me today.  
I want to make sure that you receive the best support based on what works for you personally.  
Would you like me to put you in touch with someone that I think will be able to help more?"*

Then **use your judgement** to decide if you should: discuss with duty GP; help to book an appointment with relevant clinician/ service; or signpost to resources on the [Vital 5 website](#)

Making the right thing to do  
the easy thing to do.