



Monday 30th September 2019

FREE BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS THROUGHOUT OCTOBER TO FIGHT STROKE

- ***The Stroke Foundation's Big Blood Pressure Check extended to a month-long campaign***
 - ***Success of atrial fibrillation trial leads to more testing sites across the country***

This October marks the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand's [Big Blood Pressure Check](#), giving thousands of people the chance to get their blood pressure checked for free at participating sites across the country.

In its 11th year, the Stroke Foundation is calling on New Zealanders to come along to one of the Big Blood Pressure Check testing stations at various PAK'nSAVE and New World sites on **Saturday, 5 October**. Usually, there are no symptoms associated with high blood pressure. The only way to know if you are affected is to get tested.

"Getting a free blood pressure check this month could be a life saver", explained Mark Vivian, Stroke Foundation of New Zealand CEO.

This year, the campaign has been extended to last the whole month of October. If people are unable to make it down to their local supermarket on the Big Blood Pressure Check Day, they can visit Unichem and Life Pharmacies throughout October to get their free blood pressure check.

"High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke. About 20 percent of the population has high blood pressure but around a third of these people don't know it. In 2018 we tested around 13,500 people during our Big Blood Pressure Check Day; this year we'll be running the campaign throughout October, meaning we'll be able to reach more people than ever before, significantly boosting our efforts to fight stroke." Said Vivian.

As the Foundation focuses on stroke prevention efforts, the campaign continues to grow. This year, the Foundation has invested in a new piece of technology to detect the heart condition, atrial fibrillation (AF). AF is a heart rhythm problem which can create the risk of blood clots and therefore increase the risk of stroke. After trialling the new device at the Wellington Emergency Services expo, the free test will also be offered across various sites throughout October.

"Like high blood pressure, many people are unaware they have AF. We want to raise awareness of these modifiable risk factors that can lead to stroke. Ultimately, it's about encouraging people to know their risk factors so that they can take action to better reduce their chance of having a stroke." Vivian says.

Everyone over the age of 45 should have an annual blood pressure check.

Be in the know – keep it low!

A full list of testing sites can be viewed on our website: <https://www.stroke.org.nz/big-blood-pressure-check>

- ENDS -

Notes to editors:

More information about atrial fibrillation can be found here: <https://www.stroke.org.nz/atrial-fibrillation>

A selection of images can be downloaded here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e971qm6l4g4s6va/AABMzFKcQe7wROGLc3RSo12Ga?dl=0>

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About the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand

The Stroke Foundation is the national organisation in New Zealand dedicated to reducing the incidence of stroke, improving outcomes, and supporting those affected by stroke. The Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that supports a team of Community Stroke Advisors and Stroke Clubs throughout New Zealand. To find out more about the important work the Stroke Foundation does go to www.stroke.org.nz.