

One in eight people have night-time high blood pressure

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MIDDLE-AGED people may be suffering from high blood pressure without realising it, because their hypertension happens at night, scientists have found.

A study by the University of Oxford found that one in eight people aged 40 to 75 had night-time high blood pressure which would not be picked up during normal daytime screening.

Healthy people usually see a nocturnal dip in blood pressure, but research found 15 per cent of people experience a dangerous rise at night.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence advises that GPs diagnose hypertension based on day-time blood pressure measurements. The researchers called for more use of ambulatory blood pressure monitoring, with a cuff worn over a 24-hour period.

Lionel Tarassenko, a professor of electrical engineering at Oxford, said the “‘reverse dippers’ – mostly elderly people, sometimes with diabetes or kidney disease” have lower blood pressure during the day, so will be falsely reassured by day-time monitoring.

Laura Armitage, doctoral research fellow at Oxford’s Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, said: “Our research shows that measuring night-time blood pressure could help identify the 1 in 8 adults in England who have undiagnosed hypertension.”

The research was published in the British Journal of General Practice.