

Self-measured blood pressure at home

Importance of self-measuring blood pressure

Measuring your blood pressure at home and sharing measurements with your doctor has been shown to improve blood pressure control. By providing your doctor with more blood pressure measurements than would normally be taken in the office, your doctor will have a better idea of how well your diet, exercise and medicines are working to control your high blood pressure when you are not in the office.

This handout will show you how to:

- Choose a home blood pressure monitor
- Measure your blood pressure accurately

Choosing a home blood pressure monitoring device

If you are buying your own blood pressure monitor for home use, there are a few points to consider:

- Most upper arm home blood pressure monitors cost \$50 to \$100.
- Using wrist and finger cuffs on blood pressure monitors are less accurate and not recommended.
- Monitors are available with larger displays that are easier to read.
- If you enjoy technology, some monitors can connect with your smart phone and track your blood pressure readings.
- Always purchase a monitor that has the correct size cuff for your arm.

Recommended cuff sizes for accurate measurement of blood pressure

Arm circumference	Cuff size
22 to 26 cm	12 x 22 cm (small adult)
27 to 34 cm	16 x 30 cm (adult)
35 to 44 cm	16 x 36 cm (large adult)

There are many blood pressure monitors to choose from. Always select a blood pressure monitor that has been certified (confirmed to be accurate) by one of these three respected organizations:

- Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation
- British Hypertension Society
- European Society of Hypertension

Additional certified monitors can be found on the internet at <http://tinyurl.com/mxuvn7v>.

If you buy your own device, consider taking it to your doctor's office and ask them to check the accuracy of your machine.

Measuring your blood pressure accurately

You will need to follow certain steps to help make sure that you are measuring your blood pressure accurately. Your doctor or care team may also give you instructions on how often to take your blood pressure. Always follow the advice of your doctor. Most of the time you will take two blood pressure measurements in the morning and two more in the evening for one to two weeks. You should plan to review these results with your doctor or a member of your doctor's staff. This can be done through a phone call, an office visit or using a patient portal on a computer if that is available to you.

To measure blood pressure correctly, there are things you should, and should not, do. Follow these guidelines to help make sure that you measure your blood pressure accurately every time. If you are sharing your machine with another family member or friend, remember to follow the manufacturer's instructions for changing the user.

Before you take your blood pressure:

- Do not exercise, eat a large meal, use caffeine, drink alcohol or take decongestants for 30 minutes before you take your blood pressure.
- Use the bathroom if you need to before taking your blood pressure.
- Sit quietly in a comfortable position for five minutes without crossing your legs or your ankles.
- Sit with your back supported keeping your feet flat on the floor.

When you are ready to take your blood pressure:

- Continue to sit with your back supported, your legs uncrossed and your feet flat on the floor. Use a step stool if needed to make sure your feet are flat on a surface.
- Following the instructions for your device, put the cuff on by wrapping it around your bare arm above your elbow. Face the palm of your hand up to relax your arm muscles.
- Rest your arm on a table or another flat surface at the level of your heart. Keep it stretched out and relaxed and sit still.
- Do not talk, read, text or watch television while taking your blood pressure.
- Following the directions of the monitor you are using, press the button to start the machine. The cuff will inflate and slowly deflate by itself.

When the machine has stopped taking your blood pressure:

- The machine will display two numbers. The top number is the systolic blood pressure and the bottom number is the diastolic blood pressure. Write down the date, time and result of your blood pressure if your machine does not store that information automatically. If there is a pulse recorded on the display, write that down as well.
- Remove the cuff from your arm and place the device in a safe and dry place.
- Remember to follow the instructions that your doctor or care team gave you for reporting your blood pressures. Take your written blood pressure log or the blood pressure machine with you to your next doctor's office visit if you have been instructed to do so.

For additional information on taking your blood pressure at home, see the "Patient self-measured blood pressure technique" handout.

Always make sure you know what to do should you have a blood pressure measurement that is outside the pre-determined acceptable range or if you experience any symptoms with a high or low blood pressure measurement, including seeking emergency treatment if appropriate.