How to Check Your Blood Pressure

Your doctor may have asked you to check your blood pressure (BP) at home. Follow these steps to get a correct measurement. You need a correct measurement to get the right treatment.

• Check your blood pressure in the early morning and in the evening.
  – In the morning, check before you eat, drink, or take any medicines.

• Put the cuff on your arm.
  – Remove clothes that get in the way of the cuff. Don’t roll up your sleeve in a way that’s tight around your arm.
  – The cord should go toward your hand. Line it up with the middle of your forearm.
  – The Velcro should attach easily on the cuff. If it doesn’t reach, you may need a bigger cuff.

• Measure your blood pressure by following the steps below.

1. Wait 30 minutes if you have just eaten a lot, had a drink with caffeine or alcohol, used tobacco products, or exercised. Use the restroom if you need to. (Needing to go can raise your BP.)

2. Rest both feet flat on the floor with your back supported. Rest your arm at heart level on a table or the arm of a chair.

3. Sit quietly for 5 minutes or more before taking your blood pressure. Avoid talking while your blood pressure is being measured.

4. Start the monitor. Press the button or squeeze the ball to measure your blood pressure. Write down the time, the measurement, and your pulse. Wait 2 minutes. Repeat 2 or 3 times.

Your target blood pressure: _____ / _____
What do my numbers mean?

Blood pressure is written as two numbers. The top number is the pressure when your heart beats. It’s called systolic blood pressure. The bottom number is the pressure when the heart rests between beats. It’s called diastolic blood pressure.

The table below shows what your numbers mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BP category</th>
<th>Systolic</th>
<th>Diastolic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>less than 120</td>
<td>and  less than 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevated</td>
<td>120 to 129</td>
<td>and  less than 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 High</td>
<td>130 to 139</td>
<td>or     80 to 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 High</td>
<td>140 or higher</td>
<td>or     90 or higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| EMERGENCY     | If your BP is 180/110 or higher AND you have chest pain, shortness of breath or a severe headache, get medical help fast.

Why do I need to check at home?

If you have high blood pressure, checking it at home can be an important part of your treatment.

• Home measurements can show how well your lifestyle changes and medicines are working. Your healthcare provider can use this information to make small changes to your treatment plan.

• Some people’s blood pressure is higher in a doctor’s office. You need to know if it’s lower at home.

How often? How many times?

Your healthcare provider can tell you this. In general:

• If you have been asked to check at home to compare your readings to office readings, check 6 to 10 times over 2 weeks.

• If there’s been a recent change to your blood pressure medicine, check every day, morning and night.

• If your blood pressure is in control, check 1 to 2 times per month.

How do I track my blood pressure?

Your healthcare providers can give you a booklet or card where you can track your BP like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE/TIME</th>
<th>WHERE</th>
<th>BP</th>
<th>PULSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/25 9 AM</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>145/95</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do I choose a monitor to buy?

You can buy a home monitor in a drugstore, supermarket pharmacy, or other large store. A good one costs about $50. Ask your health insurance provider if your policy covers the cost of a home blood pressure monitor.

Here are some tips for choosing one:

• Choose a monitor that inflates automatically if possible. If you have a monitor with a “squeeze ball,” have someone else squeeze the ball to inflate the cuff.

• Choose a monitor that also shows your pulse (heartbeats per minute). Some blood pressure medicines affect your pulse, so your doctor may ask you to keep track of it. A normal pulse is 60 to 100 heartbeats per minute.

• Choose a monitor with a cuff that wraps around the upper arm. Avoid wrist cuffs. You get a more correct measurement on your arm.

• Be sure the arm cuff is the right size for your arm. Ask your healthcare provider what size cuff you need.

• Compare your blood pressure monitor to the one used in your healthcare provider’s office. To make sure you’re getting correct measurements, have your healthcare provider compare your monitor to theirs about every 6 months. Do this right away if you drop it or if the readings change suddenly.