

THE BLOOD PRESSURE SOLUTION

How to Monitor Your Blood Pressure at Home



A Practical Guide To Gaining the
Right Information and Taking Control
of Your Blood Pressure.

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Introduction

By far, the most important aspect of controlling your blood pressure naturally is having the right information at your fingertips so that you can make informed decisions about your health. One very important piece of the puzzle is having your actual blood pressure readings available to you on a daily basis. By empowering yourself with this data, you will be taking control of your blood pressure, and enabling yourself to make adjustments as needed as you implement The Blood Pressure Solution. In fact, the September 2008 issue of the *Harvard Heart Letter* reports that blood pressure readings can jump around so much that you are more likely to get an accurate reading if you check it at home rather than in the doctor's office.

Why Measure Your Blood Pressure At Home?

In order to properly monitor your blood pressure you will want to be able to take readings at home. Tracking this data will help you stay consistent with this process and allow you to see how you are progressing.

After all, you will want to know that the changes you have made to your diet and lifestyle are helping to bring your blood pressure under control. Or, you may realize that more changes are needed in order to bring your blood pressure down.

By measuring your blood pressure at home you will get the benefits of more frequent readings, and avoid the hassle of driving to a pharmacy or the expense

of a doctor's visit. In addition, you may also get more accurate readings since you are in a familiar environment, rather than a doctor's office.

Measuring your blood pressure at home can also give you a great picture of your blood pressure patterns over the course of a week or a month. This can be very valuable as you start to manage the external factors that are contributing to your high blood pressure in the first place. For instance, you may notice that on Tuesdays your blood pressure is much higher than other days of the week. You also remember that on Tuesdays your schedule keeps you busy from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m. and is very stressful. This kind of information can help you begin to modify your lifestyle to eliminate highly stressful situations, or at least reduce the amount of stress you experience. That is just one example of how measuring your blood pressure frequently can be used to help you understand the complete picture more easily.



Many people find that measuring their own blood pressure helps them feel more in control of their situation. They say knowledge is power, and I believe that by proactively monitoring your own blood pressure you are sending a subconscious signal to your body that YOU are in control and that YOU are going to manage the situation so that your readings begin to show normal blood pressure ranges.

Choosing The Right Monitor For You



Now that you've decided to monitor your blood pressure at home, you will need to get a home blood pressure monitor. There is a wide range of monitors available, but it is important to be sure that the monitor you choose is the right one for you.

The easiest to use type of monitors are the ones that are considered fully automatic.

Choose one that measures your blood pressure at your upper arm, rather than your wrist or finger.

Upper-arm monitors usually give the most accurate and consistent results.

Make sure your monitor is accurate by verifying that the monitor you chose has been 'clinically validated' for accuracy. This means that it has gone through a series of tests to make sure it gives results that you and your doctor can trust.

Make sure that you have the right cuff size as well. An upper-arm monitor will come with a cuff that wraps around your upper-arm. If you use a cuff that is too tight to begin with, the reading will be inaccurate.

In order to choose the proper cuff size, simply measure your upper arm at the midpoint between your elbow and your shoulder. Then consult the chart below to select the right cuff size for you.

MONITOR CUFF SIZES		
Measurement (cm)	Measurement (inches)	Cuff size
18-22	7.1-8.7	Small
22-32	8.8.-12.8	Medium
32-45	12.8-18	Large

How To Measure Your Own Blood Pressure

There are a few simple steps that you can follow to be sure that you get an accurate measurement.

Before taking your blood pressure:

1. Make sure you do not need to use the restroom.
2. Make sure you have not just eaten a big meal.
3. Make sure you have not had any caffeine or smoked within 30 minutes.

Next, make sure you are wearing loose fitting shirt or top, specifically around your upper arm area.

Always use the same arm for your blood pressure readings.

Sit down at a table or desk, rest your arm on the surface, and let your feet sit flat on the floor.

Next, relax and rest for about 3-5 minutes to allow your body to calm down.

Then, follow your monitor manufacturer's instructions to place the cuff around your upper arm in a position that is roughly at the same level as your heart. It may help to put a cushion under your arm to help get the cuff at heart level.

REMEMBER!

Stay calm, relaxed and comfortable. If you are anxious or uncomfortable, this will make your blood pressure rise temporarily.

Also, keep as still as possible and silent. Breathe normally.

After you have taken your first reading, wait about 2 minutes, and take a second reading. Wait 2 more minutes, and take a 3rd reading. Sometimes people find that the first reading is much higher than the 2nd or 3rd reading. If this is the case for you as well, keep taking readings every 2 minutes until your blood pressure stops falling and levels out.

Be sure to record your readings. You can keep a small journal with your results, but many of the automatic monitors will store this for you. Just choose whatever method is easiest for you.

NOTES:

Don't be alarmed if you get an unexpected high reading. A one-off reading may be nothing to worry about. Measure your blood pressure again at another time, but if you find that it continues to be high consistently, then see your doctor or nurse.

TIP:

If you are under a great deal of stress or worry, don't attempt to take your blood pressure reading. Stress will elevate your blood pressure temporarily causing your readings to be high. Instead, wait until things have calmed down later in the day and you feel more relaxed.

When To Measure Your Blood Pressure

Since you are actively trying to lower your high blood pressure, it is important to take regular blood pressure readings so that you can know exactly how your body is responding to your dietary and lifestyle changes.

When you first start measuring your blood pressure, discard your first day's readings – they may not be accurate because you are not familiar with using a monitor.

I recommend the following schedule for taking your daily blood pressure readings:

Morning: wait 30 minutes after you wake up, but before you do any exercise or eat any food. Measure several times, waiting 2-3 minutes between each measurement. You will wait for the blood pressure readings to stabilize . . . then use the last reading you take.

Evening: wait at least an hour after eating your final meal of the day, measure several times, waiting 2-3 minutes between each measurement. You will wait for the blood pressure readings to stabilize . . . then use the last reading you take.

Follow this 'morning-evening' schedule for all 7 days of the week, and be sure to record your readings along with the date and time.



Working With Your Doctor Or Nurse

As always, I recommend keeping your doctor or nurse informed of your blood pressure readings on a periodic basis. By showing them your history of blood pressure readings, and by explaining the dietary and lifestyle changes that you have made to achieve much lower blood pressure, you will provide them with important data points they can use in your overall health plan.

Checklist

Using this guide, you now have the information you need to accurately monitor your blood pressure at home. You can use the following checklist to make sure you are covering the key points of this guide:

- Make sure that you sit quietly for 3-5 minutes prior to taking your blood pressure reading.
- Make sure you are using a blood pressure monitor that uses a cuff that goes around your upper arm.
- Make sure the cuff is the proper size for your arm.

- Make sure you measure your blood pressure on the same arm each time.
- Make sure you measure your blood pressure at least three times when you sit down to measure it. Each measurement should come 2 minutes after the last one. As you see your blood pressure readings stabilize...use the final reading.
- Make sure you are seated comfortably at a table, with your feet flat on the floor.
- Make sure your arm is supported and at the same height as your heart.

NOTES

BLOOD PRESSURE TRACKING SHEET

Use this sheet to track your blood pressure readings over time. If you make any changes to your medications, diet, exercise plan, or experience any other circumstances that could affect your readings, make a note of this in the "Adjustments or Observations" column.

BLOOD PRESSURE TRACKING SHEET