

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

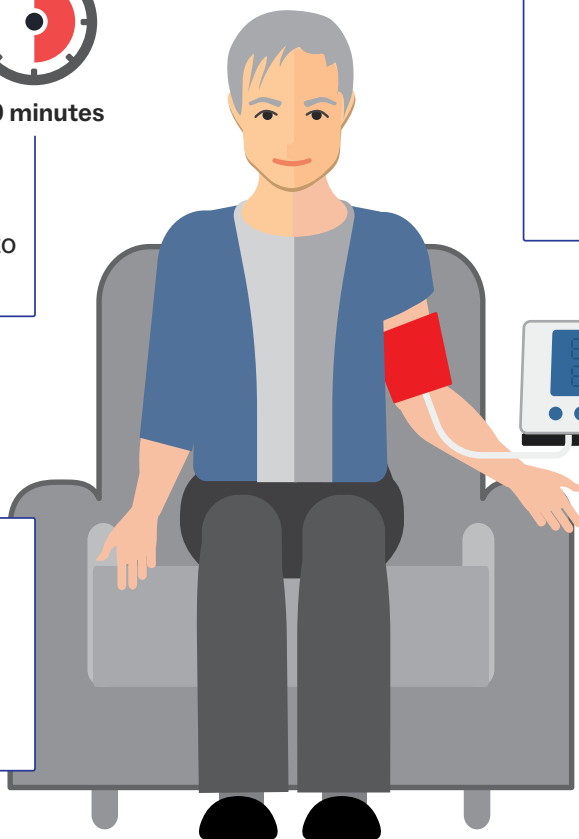
if you have just eaten a lot, had a drink with caffeine or alcohol, used tobacco products, or exercised.

Use the restroom if you need to. (Needing to go can raise your BP.)



30 minutes

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.



5 minutes

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.

BP category	Systolic	/	Diastolic
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80
Elevated	120 to 129	and	less than 80
Stage 1 High	130 to 139	or	80 to 89
Stage 2 High	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
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:

DATE/TIME	WHERE	BP	PULSE
6/25 9 AM	Home	145/95	73

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.