
Taking Your Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the artery wall as it moves from the heart through the blood vessels. You can take your own blood pressure reading using a digital monitor. Take your readings the same each time, using the same arm. Take readings as often as your healthcare provider advises.

About blood pressure monitors

Blood pressure monitors are designed for certain ages and cases. You can find monitors for older adults, for pregnant people, and for children. Make sure the one you choose is the right one for your age and situation.

Experts advise an automatic cuff monitor that fits on your upper arm (bicep). The cuff should fit your arm size. A cuff that's too large or too small won't give an accurate reading. Measure around your upper arm to find your size.

Monitors that attach to your finger or wrist are not as accurate as monitors for your upper arm.

Ask your healthcare provider for help choosing a monitor. Bring your monitor to your next provider visit if you need help using it the correct way.

The steps below are general instructions for using an automatic digital monitor.

Step 1. Relax



- Take your blood pressure at the same time every day, such as in the morning or evening. Or take it at the time your healthcare provider advises.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after smoking, eating, or exercising. Don't drink coffee, tea, soda, or other caffeinated drinks before checking your blood pressure. Use the restroom beforehand.

- Sit comfortably at a table with both feet on the floor. Don't cross your legs or feet. Place the monitor near you.
- Rest for at least 5 minutes before you begin. Make sure there are no distractions. This includes TV, cell phones, and other electronics. Wait to have conversations with others until after you measure your blood pressure.

Step 2. Wrap the cuff



- Place your arm on the table, palm up. Your arm should be at the level of your heart. Wrap the cuff around your upper arm, just above your elbow. It's best done on bare skin, not over clothing. Most cuffs will show you where the blood vessel in the middle of the arm at the inner side of the elbow (the brachial artery) should line up with the cuff. Look in your monitor's instruction booklet for an illustration. You can also bring your cuff to your healthcare provider and have them show you how to correctly place the cuff.

Step 3. Inflate the cuff



- Push the button that starts the pump.
- The cuff will tighten, then loosen.
- The numbers will change. When they stop changing, your blood pressure reading will appear.
- Take 2 or 3 readings 1 minute apart, or as advised by your provider.

Step 4. Write down the results of each reading



- Write down your blood pressure numbers for each reading. Note the date and time. Keep your results in one place, such as a notebook. Even if your monitor has a built-in memory, keep a hard copy of the readings.
- Remove the cuff from your arm. Turn off the machine.
- Bring your blood pressure records with you to each provider visit.
- If you start a new blood pressure medicine, note the day you started the new medicine. Also note the day if you change the dose of your medicine. Measure your blood pressure before you take your medicine. This information goes on your blood pressure recording sheet. This will help your provider check how well the medicine changes are working.
- Ask your provider what numbers mean that you should call them. Also ask what numbers mean that you should get help right away. Write this information on your blood pressure log, along with your provider's telephone number.