

Taking Blood Pressure at Home

Taking your blood pressure at home is simple and easy. And it can help you find out if you have high blood pressure. Or if you know you have high blood pressure, you can see if medicine and lifestyle changes are helping to lower it.

And that helps you and your doctor manage your blood pressure. If you need to buy a monitor, try to find one that measures blood pressure in your arm. You may need to measure your arm so you can choose a monitor with a cuff that's the right size.

If the cuff—that's the part that fits on your arm—doesn't fit right, you may need to try using a wrist monitor instead. Look in the package of the monitor for instructions about fitting the cuff properly.

Remember, you can always ask your doctor for help. If you can, try to choose a monitor that can save your blood pressure readings. Some monitors can even send your readings to your doctor.

But if your monitor doesn't save the readings, it's okay. You can still track your readings by writing them down in a notebook. It's also a good idea to choose a monitor that's been validated for accuracy.

At your next regular visit, take the monitor to your doctor's office to make sure it works right and to be sure you know how often to use it. And bring along some recent readings from home.

This way you can compare your readings to the ones you get at your doctor's office. That can help you and your doctor make sure you get the right treatment. Here are some tips to help you get a good reading at home.

Don't drink caffeine, smoke, or exercise for at least 30 minutes before taking a reading. It's also a good idea to empty your bladder before you get started. When you get ready to take your blood pressure, rest quietly in a comfortable, straight-backed chair for 5 minutes.

Don't talk or text while you're resting. Keep both feet on the floor, and relax. Sit with your arm slightly bent and resting comfortably on a table.

Your upper arm should be at roughly the same level as your heart. Wrap the cuff around the bare skin of your upper arm. Turn the monitor on, and follow the instructions.

The cuff will inflate around your arm. Don't talk or move while you're taking the reading. When the measurement is done, the cuff will deflate, and the numbers on the screen will show you your blood pressure.

Take your blood pressure as often as your doctor recommends. Be sure to use the same arm each time you take your blood pressure. And, along with each reading, keep track of its date and time.

Take those records with you to your next appointment, so you can talk about them with your doctor. Remember, by checking your readings at home, you'll have the information you need to help keep your blood pressure in check.