

How to Check Your Blood Pressure

How To Pick A Monitor

- Choose the type of blood pressure monitor that's best for you:
 - An automatic arm cuff inflates on its own.
 - This may not work if you have an irregular heartbeat.
 - A manual arm cuff displays readings automatically, but you must inflate the cuff by pumping a bulb.
 - Wrist monitors are easy to use, but cost more and are not as reliable as arm cuffs.
 - These can be used if you have a very large arm that doesn't fit well in an arm cuff.
 - Fingertip monitors are not as reliable as other types. Avoid these.
- Ask your pharmacist to help you choose a reliable product.
 - Good brands include *Omron* and *Lifescource*. These companies also make some store brand monitors.
- Other things to look at before you buy a monitor:
 - Make sure you can read the display easily.
 - With arm monitors, choose the correct size cuff for your arm.

What To Do BEFORE You Take Your Blood Pressure

- Sit quietly for at least five minutes before taking the reading.
- Sit up straight with feet flat on the floor and back supported.
- Do not cross legs or ankles.
- Keep your upper arm at the level of your heart.

How To Take Your Blood Pressure

- Roll up your sleeve or remove any clothing with a tight sleeve.
- Avoid talking while you take your blood pressure.
- If you're using an arm cuff, rest your arm on a table with your palm up.
- If you're using a wrist monitor, keep your wrist level with your heart.
- Take your blood pressure two or three times.
 - Wait a minute or two between each measurement. Record the average of the readings.
- At least once a year, take your home monitor with you to your healthcare provider. Compare the readings from your monitor with their blood pressure monitor.
 - Do this more often if your monitor is dropped or if the blood pressure readings change suddenly.

What Blood Pressure Numbers Mean

- Your blood pressure shows how hard your heart works to pump blood.
 - The top number (systolic) is the pressure when the heart contracts.
 - The bottom number (diastolic) is the pressure when the heart relaxes.
- People with high blood pressure have more heart attacks, strokes, kidney disease, and blindness.
- Your blood pressure might read lower with your home monitor compared to your provider's monitor.
- Talk with your provider if you are concerned about your readings.

What You Can Do To Lower Your Blood Pressure

- Keep a healthy weight
- Watch your salt intake
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Exercise regularly
- Stop smoking
- Do not drink too much alcohol

[This handout may not cover all possible information. It does not replace the need for professional medical care. Always follow the instructions from your healthcare provider.] [January 2018; 340102]