

How to Check Your Blood Pressure

How To Pick A Monitor

- Choose the type of monitor that's best for you:
 1. An automatic arm cuff inflates on its own. This type may not work if you have an irregular heartbeat.
 2. A manual arm cuff displays readings automatically, but you must inflate the cuff by pumping a bulb.
 3. Wrist monitors are easy to use, but cost more than other monitors and can be slightly less consistent than arm cuffs. These are good if you have a big arm that doesn't fit well in an arm cuff.
 4. 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 *Lifesource*. These companies also make some store brand monitors.
- Other things to look at before you buy a monitor:
 1. Make sure you can read the display easily.
 2. With arm monitors, choose the correct size cuff for your arm.

What To Do BEFORE You Take Your Blood Pressure

- Wait at least half an hour after eating, smoking, or exercising and a couple hours after having caffeine to get the best reading.
- 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 three times. Wait a few minutes between each measurement. Record the average of the three readings.
- It is important to check the blood pressure reading from your home machine with your health care provider at least once a year. Do this more often if the machine 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're concerned about your readings.

What You Can Do To Lower Your Blood Pressure

- Keep a healthy weight
- Watch your sodium intake
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Exercise regularly
- Stop smoking
- Don't drink too much alcohol

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