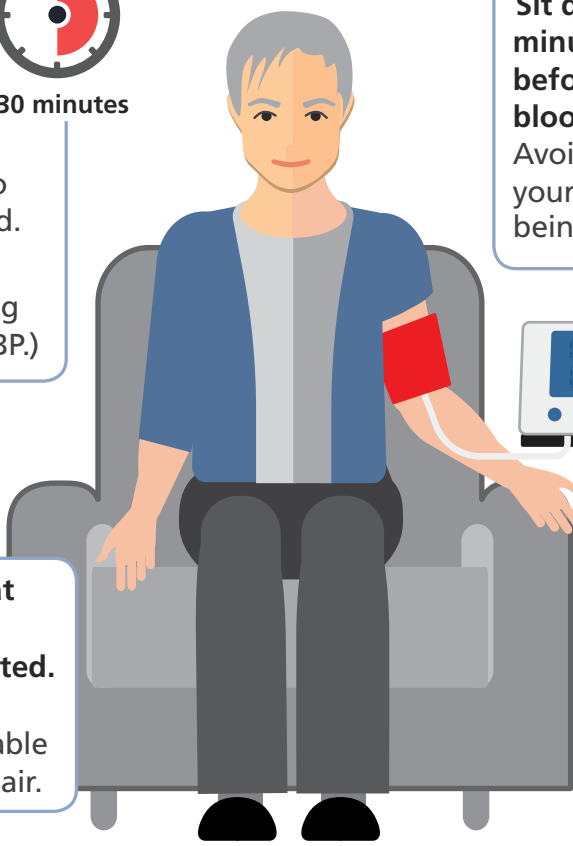


How to Check Your Blood Pressure

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.

| | Top number (systolic) | | Bottom number (diastolic) |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----|----------------------------------|
| Normal | less than 130 | and | less than 80 |
| Borderline high blood pressure | 130 to 139 | or | 80 to 89 |
| High blood pressure | 140 or higher | or | 90 or higher |
| Emergency | If your BP is 180/105 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.

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