

## Checking Blood Pressure at Home

If you have high blood pressure, knowing how to check your own blood pressure is both useful and important.

### Why Check Blood Pressure at Home?

Checking your blood pressure at home does not replace going to the doctor. But because people are generally more relaxed at home than at the doctor's office, their blood pressure may be lower at home. Therefore, when deciding on treatment options, it may be helpful to have information about both home and office blood pressure measurements available.

It is also helpful to bring your blood pressure monitor to your doctor's appointments with you. Your doctor can make sure that you are checking your blood pressure correctly. Your machine can be checked against the office machine to look for any differences in readings.

### Choosing a Blood Pressure Monitor

Blood pressure monitors with an inflatable cuff that goes over the **bicep** (upper arm) tend to be more accurate than those that go over the wrist or finger. It is important that you use a cuff that is the right size for your arm; cuffs that are too big or too small can result in readings that are not accurate. Before buying a machine, measure around your upper arm and check to make sure that the measurement you get is included in the range of the cuff. There is no particular brand that is best.

### When to Check Blood Pressure

A person's blood pressure varies throughout the day, so it is normal to get different readings at different times and on different days. The best times to check your blood pressure are in the morning after you wake up or in the evening before you go to bed. If you take blood pressure medication, it is okay to check your blood pressure either before or after you take the medication.

Factors such as caffeine, exercise, alcohol, stress level, and time of day can affect blood pressure. Try to measure your blood pressure at the same time every day. You should keep a record of all your blood pressure readings and the time of day you took them, and bring this log with you when you see your doctor.

### How to Check Blood Pressure

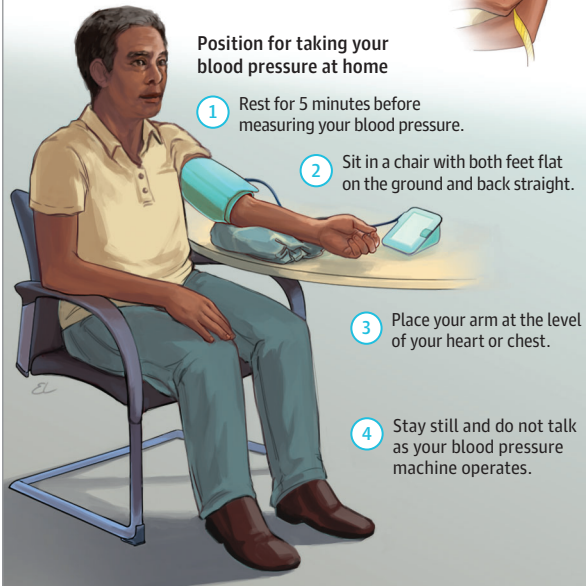
1. Sit in a chair with both feet flat on the ground and your back straight. It is recommended you sit for about 5 minutes before measuring your blood pressure.
2. Rest your arm on a surface (such as a table) around the level of your heart or chest.

#### Choosing the correct blood pressure cuff size

Measure the circumference of your upper arm with a cloth measuring tape midway between the elbow and shoulder. Choose a cuff size that includes this measurement.



#### Position for taking your blood pressure at home



Measure your blood pressure in the morning right after you wake up or in the evening before you go to bed.

Try to measure your blood pressure at the same time every day.

3. Take your blood pressure according to the instructions of your machine. Stay still and do not talk as the machine is working.
4. It can sometimes be helpful to repeat another blood pressure reading 1 to 2 minutes later and use the average of the 2 readings.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

American Heart Association

[www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/KnowYourNumbers/Monitoring-Your-Blood-Pressure-at-Home\\_UCM\\_301874\\_Article.jsp#.WUI5w-vyvDA](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/KnowYourNumbers/Monitoring-Your-Blood-Pressure-at-Home_UCM_301874_Article.jsp#.WUI5w-vyvDA)

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**Correction:** This article was corrected online on July 20, 2017, to update the image.

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