

Home Blood Pressure Test

A home blood pressure test allows you to keep track of blood pressure at home. When blood pressure is high, it can damage blood vessels, the heart, kidneys, and the brain. Controlling blood pressure can lower the risk for these complications. Blood pressure readings include two numbers, such as 130/80 mmHg (say "130 over 80"). The first number is the systolic pressure. The second number is the diastolic pressure.

Blood pressure numbers are often lower at home than at the clinic. **The goal for your blood pressure is for the top number to be less than _____ and the bottom number to be less than _____.**

Why is this test done?

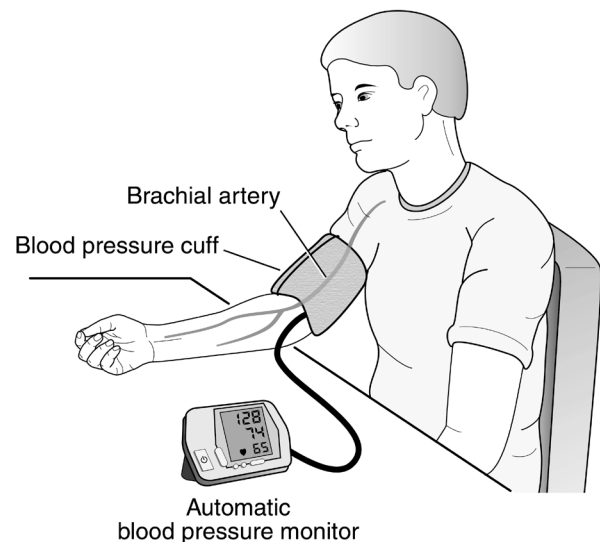
- Find out if blood pressure is high.
- Track high blood pressure.
- Track how well medicine is working to reduce high blood pressure.
- Assess symptoms that may be from low or high blood pressure.
- Check how lifestyle changes, such as weight loss and exercise, affect blood pressure.

How to prepare for the test

- Do not use caffeine, tobacco, or medicines known to raise blood pressure (such as nasal decongestant sprays) for at least 30 minutes before taking the blood pressure.
- Do not eat or exercise for at least 30 minutes before taking the blood pressure.
- Have an empty bladder before taking the blood pressure.

How to check blood pressure at home

- Take the blood pressure while feeling comfortable and relaxed.
- Sit quietly with the back supported and both feet flat on the floor for at least 5 minutes before the test.
- Do not talk, watch TV, or look at a phone or tablet during the test.
- Sit with the arm slightly bent and resting on a table so that the upper arm is at the same level as the heart.
- Roll up the sleeve or take off a shirt to expose the upper arm.
- Wrap the blood pressure cuff around the upper arm so that the lower edge of the cuff is about 1 inch above the bend of the elbow.



Checking Blood Pressure with an Automatic Blood Pressure Monitor

- Press the on/off button on the automatic monitor. Wait until the ready symbol or message appears next to zero in the display window.

- Press the start button. The cuff will inflate and deflate by itself. Some machines measure the blood pressure 3 times.
- The blood pressure numbers will appear on the screen.
- If your machine does not store the blood pressure and heart rate readings, write them down, along with the date and time.

When to Check the Blood Pressure at Home

- At first, check the blood pressure 2 times each day at different times of day or as instructed by your clinic.
- Check in the morning and in the evening. Take 2 blood pressure measurements at least a minute apart.
- Write down the blood pressure numbers.

Follow-Up Visits

Follow-up visits are a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments. Call the doctor for problems. Keep a list of the medicines being taken.

When to Call

Call the doctor or seek medical care **right away** if:

- The blood pressure is above ___ for the top number or above ___ for the bottom number.
- The blood pressure is below ___ for the top number or below ___ for the bottom number.

- High blood pressure is causing symptoms such as:
 - Severe headache
 - Blurry vision

Watch closely for changes in health. Be sure to contact the doctor if not getting better.

Call 911

- If you think you may need emergency care.
- If there are symptoms of a stroke. These may include:
 - Sudden numbness, tingling, weakness, or loss of movement in the face, arm, or leg, especially on only one side of the body
 - Sudden vision changes
 - Sudden trouble speaking
 - Sudden confusion or trouble understanding simple statements
 - Sudden problems with walking or balance
 - A sudden, severe headache that is different from past headaches
- If there are symptoms of a heart attack. These may include:
 - Chest pain or pressure, or a strange feeling in the chest
 - Sweating
 - Shortness of breath
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Pain, pressure, or a strange feeling in the back, neck, jaw or upper belly or in one or both shoulders or arms
 - Lightheadedness or sudden weakness
 - A fast or irregular heartbeat

