Adult Guide for Checking Your Blood Pressure at Home

Checking blood pressure at home helps you and your care team know if your blood pressure readings are staying within healthy ranges. When blood pressure is high, it can damage blood vessels, the heart, kidneys, and the brain. Keeping your blood pressure in a healthy range can lower the risk for these problems.

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.

Reasons to Check Your Blood Pressure at Home

- Track trends in blood pressure results.
- Track how well medicine is working to lower high blood pressure.
- Identify symptoms that may be from low or high blood pressure.
- Get to know how lifestyle changes, such as weight loss and exercise, affect blood pressure.

Use an Accurate Blood Pressure Monitor

It is important to use an accurate monitor.

If you already have a home blood pressure monitor, make sure it is accurate.

- Check that it is listed on validatebp.org. The devices listed on this site meet national standards for accuracy.
- Check that you have an appropriate cuff size for your arm circumference.

If your monitor is not listed on the website, or if the cuff size is wrong, you should either:

- Buy a new monitor listed on validatebp.org with the right cuff size.
- Have an accuracy check done on your current home monitor to ensure that it is accurate. Call your primary care clinic to schedule an accuracy check.

If you need a blood pressure monitor, you can find a list of trusted blood pressure monitors at validatebp.org. Be sure you choose one that fits your arm correctly.

The best blood pressure monitors are those with:

- A monitor that is digital (no pumping up bulbs or reading needles).
- Cuffs that fit on your upper arm. Avoid wrist or finger machines as they are less accurate.
    - If you prefer a wrist cuff, talk to your health care provider about your options.

How to Find the Right Cuff Size



Finding the correct size cuff ensures the readings are more accurate. To find your cuff size, measure the circumference of (width around) your upper arm half-way between your shoulder and elbow in centimeters or inches.

Insurance
Some insurance plans may cover the cost of a blood pressure machine ordered by your healthcare provider. Check with your insurance carrier to see if it will be covered under durable medical equipment.

Costs will vary based on features, integration with healthcare systems and where you order or purchase the device.

Device Lifespan
The average lifetime of a home blood pressure monitor is 5 years. This depends on care and use. If you are concerned about your device's accuracy, please schedule an accuracy check for your device.

When to Check Blood Pressure at Home
Check your blood pressure 2 times each day unless told otherwise by your clinic.

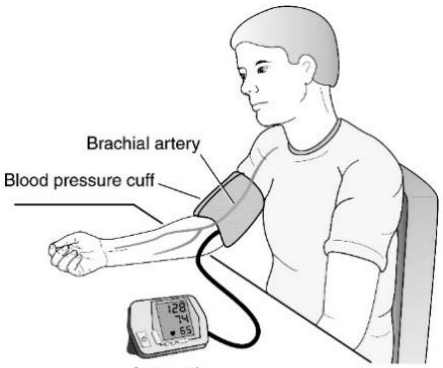
- Check in the morning before you take your blood pressure medicine, shower, etc.
- Check a second time before your evening meal.
- Write down both blood pressure numbers and the date you took them.

Before Checking Blood Pressure

- **Do not** use caffeine, tobacco, or medicines known to raise blood pressure (such as nasal decongestant sprays) for at least 30 minutes before checking your blood pressure.
- **Do not** eat or exercise for at least 30 minutes before checking your blood pressure.
- Go to the bathroom before checking.

How to Check Blood Pressure
The person getting their blood pressure checked should:

1. Sit comfortably on a chair with your back supported and feet on the floor.
2. Wrap the cuff around your bare, upper arm so that the lower edge of the cuff is about 1 inch above the bend of the elbow. The arm should be resting on a table at chest height.
3. Rest quietly for 5 minutes.
4. **Do not** talk, watch TV, or look at a phone or tablet during the test.
5. Press on/start button.
6. Record the results in your home blood pressure log.



Automatic
blood pressure monitor

Follow-Up Visits
Be sure to make and go to all follow-up visits. These visits are a key part of your treatment and safety. When you come for these visits, bring:

- A record of your blood pressures.
- A list of the medicines you are taking.

When to Call
Watch closely for changes in your health. Contact your provider's office if you:

- Think you are having side effects to the blood pressure medicine.
- Have blood pressures above the goal set by your provider.

When to Call 911

Call 911 if you think you may need emergency care. This could include symptoms of a stroke or heart attack.

Stroke Symptoms

- 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 headache.

Heart Attack Symptoms

- 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.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 4/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7684

Home Blood Pressure Log

Your blood pressure goal is: _____.
Contact your provider's office for blood pressures:

- Systolic (upper number) below _____ or above _____.
- Diastolic (bottom number) below _____ or above _____.

Call your provider's office or seek medical care **right away** if:

- High blood pressure is causing symptoms such as:
  - Severe headache
  - Blurry vision
- Low blood pressure is causing symptoms such as:
  - Lightheadedness or dizziness
  - Confusion
  - Feeling more tired than usual

Date	Time	Blood Pressure Reading #1	Heart Rate	Time	Blood Pressure Reading #2	Heart Rate	Comments

Date	Time	Blood Pressure Reading #1	Heart Rate	Time	Blood Pressure Reading #2	Heart Rate	Comments