

Home Blood Pressure Monitors

Approximately 40% to 50% of adults in the United States have hypertension (high blood pressure). One very important part of managing this disease is monitoring blood pressure. Patients have blood pressure checked at each physician visit, but there are many benefits to patients taking their own blood pressure at home. Patients may feel more in control of their disease, and treatment and medication changes may be made based on these results. There are several things to think about when considering home blood pressure monitors.

Picking the Best Monitor for You

- Select a cuff that fits comfortably. You should be able to slide one finger under the cuff and the lower edge should be one inch above your elbow. Larger/smaller cuffs may be ordered.
- Select the type that best suits your needs:
 1. Automatic arm cuff - fits around the upper arm and automatically inflates. This type may not work for some people who have irregular heartbeats.
 2. Manual arm cuff - readings automatically display, but you must inflate the cuff by pumping a bulb.
 3. Wrist monitors - very convenient, but usually more expensive than other monitors, and slightly less consistent.
 4. Fingertip monitors - considered slightly less reliable than other models.
- Other things to consider: Is the digital display large enough for you to read easily? Does the machine have the ability to store blood pressure values in its memory or will you need to keep these records?

Before Taking Your Blood Pressure

- You want to sit quietly for a few minutes before taking a blood pressure.
- Sit up straight with feet flat on the floor. Do not cross your legs or your ankles.
- Wait at least half an hour after eating, drinking caffeinated drinks, smoking, or exercising in order to get the most accurate reading.

Taking Blood Pressure

- Roll up the sleeve on your arm or remove any tight-sleeved clothing.
- For arm models rest your arm on a table with your palm facing upwards. For wrist models keep your wrist level with your heart.
- Avoid talking while taking your blood pressure.
- May repeat blood pressure after a few minutes.
- It is important to check the blood pressure readings from your home machine with your physician at least once or twice a year, or more frequently if the machine is dropped or if blood pressure readings change suddenly.

What Blood Pressure Numbers Mean

The readings from the blood pressure machine indicate how hard your heart is working to pump blood. The top number (systolic pressure) indicates the pressure while the heart pumps and the bottom number (diastolic pressure) indicates the pressure between heartbeats. The goal is to have blood pressure below 120/80.

How to Reduce Blood Pressure

There are several dietary and lifestyle changes that can be made to decrease blood pressure. These include weight loss, decreased sodium intake, increased exercise, stop smoking, and increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. There are many other things you can do to help control your blood pressure, just ask your healthcare professional.