

Measuring Your Blood Pressure at Home

It is important to measure your blood pressure to know if it is high.

- When blood pressure is high, it starts to damage the blood vessels, heart and kidneys. It can lead to a heart attack, stroke, kidney disease and other problems. Most people with high blood pressure don't know they have it because there are usually no symptoms.
- A home blood pressure monitor makes it easy to keep track of your blood pressure.
- You can check your blood pressure at different times and in different places (such as at home and at work) during the day.
- Checking your blood pressure at home or work helps you partner with your doctor in managing your blood pressure. Checking it at home does not replace having it checked by your doctor.

How do I choose the best blood pressure monitor?

Look for monitors that have as many of the things listed in the “good” column as possible.

Good

- Automated
- Upper arm cuff
- Properly sized cuff
- Memory storage capacity
- Printing ability
- Ability to upload readings to a computer or other electronic device
- Accuracy checked by your doctor after purchase

Not as good

- Manual
- Wrist or finger cuff
- Too large or too small cuff
- No memory storage
- No printer
- No ability to upload readings to computer or other electronic device
- Using a monitor without consulting clinician

For an up-to-date listing of validated blood pressure cuffs:

1. Visit www.dableducational.org.
2. Click on “devices”.
3. Then click on “table” under “upper arm devices for self-measurement of blood pressure”.

What size cuff should I buy?

To measure your arm, the cuff should be positioned at least 1 inch above the bend of your arm at your elbow. Then take the measurement around the top edge of the cuff.

Find your size in the list on the left and choose the size cuff listed in the column on the right.

Adult arm circumference	Recommended cuff size
22-26 cm / 8.7-10.2 in	12 x 22 cm (small adult)
27-34 cm / 10.6-13.4 in	16 x 30 cm (adult)
35-44 cm / 13.8-17.3 in	16 x 36 cm (large adult)
45-52 cm / 17.7-20.5 in	16 x 42 cm (adult thigh)
More than 52 cm / 20.5 in	Wrist cuff

Check your insurance coverage before buying a cuff:

Medicare does not cover home blood pressure equipment, but some private insurance plans do. Call your insurance company to find out if your plan covers blood pressure equipment.

What should I do to get the best reading?

For the most accurate reading do all of the following:

1. No caffeine, tobacco or exercise for 30 minutes before reading.
2. Empty your bladder.
3. Sit quietly for 5 minutes before the reading.
4. Sit in a chair with back support.
5. Place your feet flat on the floor.
6. Set the cuff on the table. Place your upper, bare arm in the cuff so your arm is resting at heart level.
7. Position cuff according to manufacturer’s instructions.
8. Relax and don’t talk during the measurement.