

Blood Pressure Patient Education

When should I check my blood pressure?

Follow your doctor's instructions for when and how often to check your blood pressure. Try to measure your blood pressure at about the same time each day (ie, AM before medications and PM before dinner). Keep in mind that certain factors can cause blood pressure to temporarily increase. Wait at least 30 minutes if exposed to the following factors:

- Stress
- Smoking
- Cold temperatures
- Exercise
- Full stomach
- Full bladder (need to urinate)
- Caffeine

Before taking your blood pressure:

- Visit this website to see if your BP cuff is considered accurate: www.dablededucational.org
 - Upper arm devices > wrist devices in terms of accuracy, but either is acceptable.
 - *It is **NOT** recommended to use finger or smart phone app devices.*
- Remove any tight fitting clothing on your arm.
- *Make sure that the length of bladder encircles at least 80% of your arm, or the blood pressure measured may be inaccurate.*
- Rest in a chair next to a table for 5 to 10 minutes. (Your left arm should rest comfortably, at heart level.)
- Sit up straight with your back against the chair, with your legs uncrossed and on the ground.
- Rest your forearm on the table with the palm of your hand facing up.
- You should not talk, read the newspaper, or watch television during this process.
- **Important:** If you did not get an accurate reading, DO NOT re-inflate the cuff right away. Wait one minute before repeating the measurement. Start by reapplying the cuff.

Record your blood pressure:

- Follow your doctor's instructions on when and how often you should measure your blood pressure.
- Take at least two readings each time you check your blood pressure.
- Record the date, time, systolic (top number) and diastolic (bottom number) pressures, heart rate, and the arm in which you checked your blood pressure.
- Note any questions/concerns about what is going on that day (ie, dizzy, short of breath, headache, missed medication, etc) to help when reviewing with the doctor at your clinic visit.

Frequently asked questions about blood pressure:

- It is normal for the blood pressure to vary from one day to the next. When you bring your blood pressure log to your clinic visit, the doctor will be evaluating the highs and lows (along with associated symptoms), as well as the average blood pressure to determine if medication changes are needed.
- Blood pressure goals are *different* for each patient; please discuss *your* goal blood pressure with your doctor.
- All medications have potential side effects; please discuss any questions/concerns about your medications with your doctor so that they can help you achieve your blood pressure goal with minimal adverse reactions.
- Some medications are cheaper than others; please discuss any questions/concerns about the cost of medications with your doctor so that they can choose medications that are within your budget.

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How to lower blood pressure without medication (lifestyle modifications):

- STOP smoking
- Reduction for *systolic* pressures listed below:
 - Lose weight (BMI goal 18.5-24.9 kg/m²)
 - 5-20 points/22 pound weight loss
 - DASH diet (diet rich in fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy)
 - 8-14 points
 - Exercise regularly
 - 4-9 points
 - Sodium restrict (2000-2500 mg/day)
 - 2-8 points
 - Reduce alcohol consumption (male <2 drinks/day, female <1 drinks/day)
 - 2-4 points
 - Treat sleep apnea, if at risk, with CPAP
 - 2-9 points

Medications that can worsen high blood pressure:

- Anti-inflammatory pain medications (NSAIDs or COX-2 Inhibitors)
- Cold medications
 - Afrin
 - Oxymetazoline
 - Phenylephrine
 - Pseudoephedrine
 - Sudafed
- Birth control pills

DASH Diet (Dietary Approaches to STOP Hypertension)

- Combination diet rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes, and low-fat dairy products.
 - 4-5 servings of fruit
 - 4-5 servings of vegetables
 - 2-3 servings of low-fat dairy
 - <25% fat
- Low in snacks, sweets, meats, and saturated and total fat
- Most effective if combined with a low sodium diet

If you desire more information about the above topic or other health related issues, please visit the following website: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/highbloodpressure.html>