



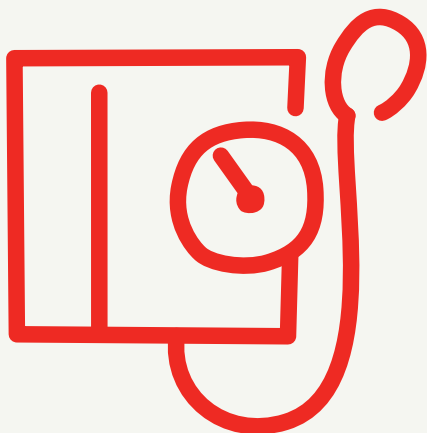
Knowing your blood pressure readings

Using a home blood pressure monitor to regularly check and record your blood pressure is an excellent way to keep track of your blood pressure control. Blood pressure testing should be done when you are calm, have not exercised recently, used a tobacco product, or consumed caffeine in the last 30 minutes. This will ensure that you receive the most accurate blood pressure readings.

Blood pressure is usually measured in a seated position, with an arm resting in a bent position, so it is at the same level as your heart. Your upper arm should be bare, with your sleeve comfortably rolled up. Following these steps will provide you the most accurate blood pressure reading if you are using an upper arm blood pressure monitor.

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Certain blood pressure monitors can also measure blood pressure via the wrist. Wrist blood pressure monitors are extremely sensitive to body position, so it is especially important to pay attention to your technique. For accurate readings with a wrist monitor, ensure that your arm and wrist are level with your heart.



Blood pressure measurements taken via the wrist can sometimes be higher and less accurate than those taken at the upper arm. It is a good idea to test the accuracy of your wrist blood pressure monitor with your health care provider or pharmacist.

Blood pressure readings are measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg) and are given as two numbers. For example, 110 over 70 (written 110/70). The top number is the systolic blood pressure reading and is the maximum pressure exerted when the heart contracts. The bottom number is the diastolic blood pressure reading and is the minimum pressure in the arteries when the heart is at rest.

As you measure your blood pressure, reference the ranges below to see what your results mean:

Blood pressure readings				
Blood pressure category	Systolic mm Hg (upper number)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower number)	
Normal	Less than 120	and	Less than 80	
Elevated	120–129	and	Less than 80	
High blood pressure (hypertension) stage 1	130–139	or	80–89	
High blood pressure (hypertension) stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher	
Hypertensive crisis (consult your doctor immediately)	Higher than 180	and/or	Higher than 120	



There are several types of home blood pressure monitors, so be sure to speak to your health care provider or pharmacist about which monitor is right for you. They will be able to walk you through how to use it and how to get the most accurate readings from your device.

As you begin regular measurement of your blood pressure, it is recommended that you use a blood pressure log to record all your readings. There are also certain blood pressure monitors that will record your readings for you. Your blood pressure log can serve as a useful tool to help you share and discuss previous blood pressure readings with your health care provider or pharmacist. It is best to take your readings daily and try to take the reading(s) at the same time(s) every day. It is also good practice to take two or three readings each time you measure (one minute apart) and record the results in your personal blood pressure log. These strategies will help you keep your readings as accurate and consistent as possible.

If you receive a reading that is slightly or moderately higher than normal, remain calm and take your blood pressure a few more times. A single high reading should not alarm you; instead, talk to your health care provider about your readings, and they will verify whether there is a health concern or an issue with your monitor. If your blood pressure readings reach 180/120 mm Hg, you should wait 5 minutes and test again. If your reading remains unusually high, please contact your doctor immediately. If your blood pressure is higher than 180/120 mm Hg and you experience any symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, weakness, change in vision, or difficulty speaking, immediately call 911.

According to the American Heart Association, when left untreated, the damage that high blood pressure does to your circulatory system is a significant contributing factor to heart attack, stroke, and other health threats. It is important to know your blood pressure readings and what they mean as they can help you better understand your plan of action, according to your readings.

Depending on certain factors and your blood pressure readings, your health care provider may decide that it is best to start you on a medication to help control your blood pressure. It may take several weeks to see the full blood pressure lowering effects. You may feel tired or experience some dizziness when you first begin taking the medication, however, these side effects should go away with time as your body adjusts to your new blood pressure levels. Keep in mind that your health care provider may need to adjust your medications and doses over the course of several months to find the best blood pressure-lowering regimen for you with minimal medication side effects.

Knowing these blood pressure ranges will help you understand what your blood pressure readings mean for your health. Remember that it is recommended to regularly monitor your blood pressure at home and have your blood pressure regularly checked by your health care provider or pharmacist, as they can offer helpful tips and guidance that will help you manage your blood pressure. This will allow you to have better conversations with your health care provider or pharmacist around successful blood pressure control and hypertension management.



References

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