**Self-Measuring Blood Pressure Can Help Keep Yours Under Control**

Do you have high blood pressure? If you’re like many Americans – an alarming half of them – chances are you don’t know. Yet high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a serious medical condition that can increase your risk of developing heart disease, stroke, and other health complications. It occurs when the force of blood against the walls of your arteries stays consistently high.

In many cases, high blood pressure symptoms can go unnoticed for years. That’s why it's so important to know your numbers. For most adults, normal blood pressure is usually less than 120/80 mm Hg. High blood pressure is diagnosed when blood pressure readings are consistently 130/80 mm Hg or higher.

Having your blood pressure measured by a healthcare provider is a key first step in blood pressure control. Once you find out your numbers, ask what they mean for your heart health and also if you should self-measure, which means measuring your blood pressure yourself, away from a clinical setting.

Having a blood pressure monitor at home allows you to measure your blood pressure any day or time that is convenient for you. You can take several steps to ensure you get the most accurate reading.

Here are some **tips** to help you get started **before your reading**:

* Avoid eating or drinking caffeine beverages like coffee or soda, or smoking, for 30 minutes before you measure.
* Go to the bathroom and empty your bladder.
* Look for a quiet area where there is a chair with a table you can use to take the reading.
* Relax for 5 minutes.

Here are some **tips** to help **during your reading** :

* Uncover your arm and wrap the blood pressure cuff around it, just above the elbow. Do not place the cuff over clothing. Make sure it fits well, or select a monitor with the correct size cuff.
* Place your arm at heart level on the table.
* Relax your muscles by keeping your feet flat, supporting your back, sitting with legs uncrossed, and keeping palms up.
* Keep calm and relax during the test.

Record your blood pressure numbers so you can share them with your healthcare provider at your next visit. Use this [worksheet](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/resources/healthy-blood-pressure-healthy-hearts-tracking-your-numbers) or [blood pressure wallet card](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/resources/my-blood-pressure-wallet-card) to keep track of your measurements.

Plan to take your blood pressure two or three times within one setting to make sure your results are the same — just make sure to wait 1 to 3 minutes between each reading. Repeated blood pressure measurements are more representative of your true blood pressure numbers. It is your pattern of measurements over time that most helps your doctor assess and manage your blood pressure. Because blood pressure varies throughout the day, you can also plan to measure it in the morning before eating or taking any medication, and then again in the evening.

If you need help with your blood pressure monitor or have concerns about your blood pressure measurements, take your monitor and recorded measurements to your next doctor’s appointment. Your provider can show you how to use your monitor properly and discuss with you what your numbers mean for your heart health and answer any questions you have about controlling your blood pressure if it’s high.

There are many ways to lower or control high blood pressure. Visit [nhlbi.nih.g](file:///C%3A/Users/galindo_b/AppData/Local/Box/Box%20Edit/Documents/yaFyIiiOGU%2Berh%2BBji7bPg%3D%3D/www.nhlbi.nih.g)ov/hypertension to find resources and learn how heart-healthy living can help you keep yours in a healthy range.