

Checking your blood pressure at home

Avoid eating, exercise or taking medication before your reading. Don't drink caffeine or smoke for 30 minutes before your reading, as these can temporarily raise blood pressure.

Empty bladder first.

Sit quietly for 5 minutes before taking your reading. Be still and silent whilst the reading is taken – talking and moving both affect accuracy.

Measure your blood pressure at the same time every day, when it is convenient for you. Each time you measure your blood pressure, take three measurements, 1-2 minutes apart.

Use a cuff that fits the top half of your arm properly. Sit in a relaxed position and place the cuff on bare skin, or over thin fabric. The cuff should be at heart level.

It's important that you only use validated machines. Finger and/or wrist blood pressure devices are not recommended.

Sit with both feet flat on the ground, and your back and arm supported.



Learn more at
bloodpressureuk.org
#KnowYourNumbers

**Blood Pressure
UK**

Helping you to lower your
blood pressure

Guidelines for Home Blood Pressure Testing



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These guidelines will help you when measuring blood pressure during Blood Pressure UK's Know Your Numbers!® Week. They are for adults over the age of 16, who are not pregnant or do not have a known irregular heartbeat. People with an irregular heart rate (arrhythmia) should go to their doctor to have their blood pressure checked, as in this situation it can be difficult to get an accurate reading using digital devices.

Blood Pressure UK strongly encourages the use of an upper arm monitor that has been listed as clinically validated in the UK, which means it has been independently tested and shown to be accurate. A list of monitors, for clinic and home use can be found on the British and Irish Hypertension Society (BIHS) website at bihsoc.org which also has information on accurate blood pressure measurement.

How to take an accurate reading on the upper arm

- Measure your blood pressure at the same time every day, when it is convenient for you
- Get yourself in a comfortable position with your legs uncrossed and your back supported
- Be still and silent whilst the reading is taken – talking and moving both affect accuracy.
- Ideally not have a full bladder as you will be less relaxed, not have exercised or had caffeine, nicotine or a large meal recently, as these can temporarily raise blood pressure.
- Wear loose clothing on your upper arm, it doesn't matter which arm you use, but try to use the same arm each time.

The equipment:

- Should be in clean, good working order and recalibrated or replaced every two years.
- Make sure the upper arm cuff fits you well. Most people can use a standard size cuff (12x35cms). The bladder inside the cuff should encircle 80% of the top of the arm. If the cuff is too big the reading will be falsely low, if it is too small the reading will be falsely high. You may need to buy a larger or smaller size.

The technique:

- The cuff should be placed two to three centimetres above the elbow joint. Place it directly next to the skin if possible, or over thin fabric
- The centre of the bladder in the cuff should be positioned over the line of the artery. Most cuffs have this marked on them
- The arm should be supported at heart level, you may need a cushion to lift it high enough. If the arm is below heart level it can lead to an overestimation of the systolic and diastolic pressure by about 10mmHg. Having the arm above heart level can lead to underestimation.
- Take your reading by turning the monitor on and pressing start. After a few minutes, take a second reading, as the first is often high.
- Write down the numbers exactly as they appear on screen.
- Use these numbers to follow the flow chart to see what action should be taken.
- Also, take a look at where the numbers correspond on our blood pressure chart.

Follow the home monitoring flow chart to see what action needs to be taken. Everyone should follow healthy lifestyle advice, information can be found on our website and in our leaflets.

NB: Home blood pressure readings should be 5mmHg lower than in clinic for each measurement, as below.

Reading is taken

<115/75 mmHg

BLOOD PRESSURE ACCEPTABLE

Re-check in 5 years or sooner
Follow lifestyle advice*

115/75 - 134/84 mmHg

HIGH SIDE OF NORMAL

Re-check in a year
Follow lifestyle advice

135/85 - 164/104 mmHg

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Re-check in 5 minutes and if still high:
Follow-up measurement e.g. by local pharmacy, practice nursing team or self-testing – if still within this range see your GP within 3 months of first reading
DO NOT IGNORE.

Over 165/105 mmHg

VERY HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Re-check in 5 minutes and if still high:
IF SHOWING SYMPTOMS (blurred vision or headaches) see your GP within 48 hours
IF NO SYMPTOMS have follow-up measurement e.g. by local pharmacy, practice nursing team or GP, ASAP
DO NOT IGNORE.

* In almost everyone, low readings (less than 85 mmHg) are normal, healthy and cause no problems. A few people with a blood pressure at these levels will have an underlying cause for their low blood pressure. If the person has a low blood pressure reading and symptoms, such as fainting and dizziness upon standing (postural drop), they should see their doctor.

Medico-legal liability for all people and organisations undertaking blood pressure measurement remains with the individual and/or their organisations and not with Blood Pressure UK.

Blood Pressure UK, the UK's blood pressure charity, provides practical information on all aspects of high blood pressure, including home monitoring, medication and lifestyle. Visit www.bloodpressureuk.org for more details.

Blood Pressure UK, The Wolfson Institute, Charterhouse Square, London EC1M 6BQ • Email: info@bloodpressureuk.org • www.bloodpressureuk.org