

### Introduction And Overview

Self-monitoring your blood pressure at home, and maintaining a history of the readings, puts you in charge of reducing and controlling hypertension. It also helps your health provider by having a more complete picture of your personal progress in keeping fit and healthy!

This short overview will show you how to take your blood pressure, and includes a blank chart that you can use to record and maintain a history of your readings.

The overview consists of three short sections:

- What you should look for in a blood pressure monitor
- When to take your blood pressure readings
- Three steps in taking your blood pressure

### The Blood Pressure Monitor

The easiest to use is also the most common. A portable battery-powered unit with an auto-inflating pressure cuff, available at virtually all drug stores, on eBay, and in most health food stores. These are made by a number of companies, from Omron to Sunbeam.



The batteries should be AA-size for light weight portability, with a minimum of four batteries to insure uniform cuff inflation. In general, the batteries should be replaced every 125 readings (about four months of a daily reading), or when the cuff inflation takes a noticeably long time.

### When To Take Your Blood Pressure

Ideally, you should take your blood pressure at the same time every day, which helps make the history you're maintaining more consistent and repeatable. A good time is in the morning after you've had breakfast, finished exercises and completed getting ready for the day. Seeing your reading in the morning also reinforces the feedback used to control your blood pressure throughout the day.

Avoid taking your blood pressure sooner than one-half hour after a meal (the blood tends to collect in the stomach during the digestive processing), or sooner than one-half hour after a moderate workout or exercise period. If you average readings during the same session, then allow at least a minute between successive cuff inflations.

### Placing The Pressure Cuff

Place the pressure cuff on your upper arm, against bare skin (again, for consistent and repeatable readings), and wrap it so that it is snug, not tight, with the upper and lower edges parallel and with equal light pressure, not skewed. If the pressure cuff has a hard clasp device then make sure it is out of the way and not exerting any pressure underneath the cuff.



### Posture

Adopt a comfortable posture, loose but firm, and try to use the same posture every time you take your blood pressure (again, for consistent and repeatable readings). The photo shows one way to achieve this, by sitting down with a straight back away from the chair's back.



### Push The Button

The blood pressure monitor will inflate the cuff and start averaging the sampled pressure readings for the time it takes to deflate the cuff. If there is a lot of noise (e.g., “crinkling”) while the cuff is inflating, then it may need to be readjusted on your upper arm if the resulting reading is erratic. This can happen when the cuff is cold, or hasn't been used in a while and needs some time to eliminate any internal wrinkles.

### Record Your Readings

All three readings should be recorded: systolic, diastolic and pulse rate, along with any notes or comments. The next page can be printed blank and used to record your readings that you and your health provider can review.