



How to get an Accurate Blood Pressure Reading at Home



true pressure of your heart on a day-to-day basis.

1. Which at-home blood pressure monitor should you buy?

Getting an accurate blood pressure reading starts with the right blood pressure machine. Make sure the machine you purchase meets American Medical Association's [criteria](#).

Machines that measure your blood pressure on your upper arm are more reliable than those that measure your wrist. You can also opt for machines that store your readings over time and submit them to your doctor, but make sure your doctor checks the machine once a year to ensure the readings are accurate. Only 50% of patients said they reported their readings to their health provider.

2. How do you get an accurate reading?

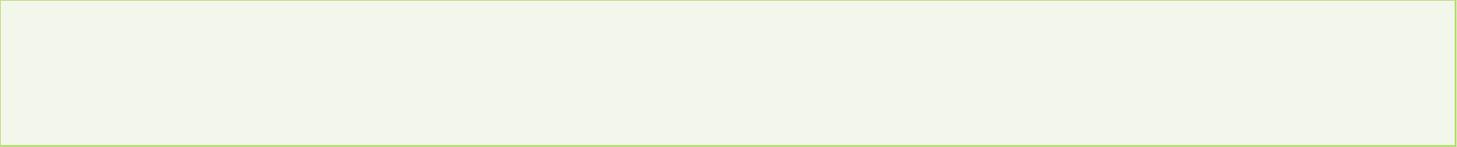
To get the most accurate reading, remember the following:

- Do not smoke, drink caffeinated beverages or exercise within 30 minutes of measuring your blood pressure.
- Make sure your bladder is empty.
- Place the cuff on your bare arm.
- Sit in an upright position with your back supported, feet flat on the floor and arm at heart level.
- Check your blood pressure at the same time each day. Try twice in the morning and twice at night and discuss the results with your doctor.

It's also important to make sure that the cuff properly fits your arm. Cuffs that are too small can artificially raise your blood pressure. Additionally, some medications and over-the-counter pain relievers can also elevate your blood pressure.

3. What's the ideal blood pressure?

Your device will give you a systolic number (the pressure against your artery walls when your heart beats) and a diastolic number (the pressure between beats).



A normal reading is 120/80 or less. If this is your reading, it is not necessary to check your pressure again for at least six months.

If your systolic number is 130 or greater and your diastolic number is 80 or greater, you should talk with your doctor about your risk of heart attack and stroke, especially if you are at higher risk (smoke, have diabetes, etc.)

If your reading is 180 or higher over 110 or higher, you are considered to have extremely high blood pressure and should contact your doctor right away.

The longer your blood pressure is high, the more at risk you are for heart attack and stroke. It is important that you closely monitor your blood pressure on a regular basis. When taking your blood pressure, it is important to remember that blood pressure can fluctuate so one high reading may not be a cause for concern. However, if your overall average for the week is high, it is important to discuss heart-healthy measures you can take to lower your blood pressure. Your doctor may recommend any of the following: medication, getting more exercise, eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, not smoking, reducing salt and alcohol consumption, lowering stress and losing weight.

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