How to
check your

Blood Pressure

Table of Contents

Washington State Department of Health

Healthy Communities Washington
Healthy people in healthy places

How to check your blood pressure

Follow these steps to make sure that you have an accurate reading.

Before you start

- Do not drink coffee for at least 30 minutes before measuring.
- Do not use tobacco products for at least 30 minutes before measuring.
- Do not exercise or eat a large meal two hours before measuring.
- Use the rest room. A full bladder can affect the reading.

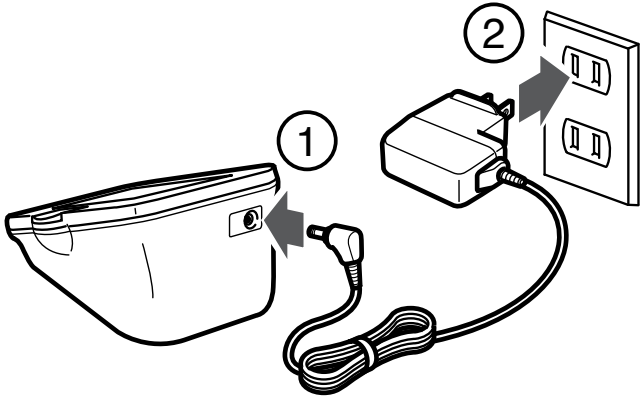
It is important to use the size of blood pressure cuff that fits your arm.

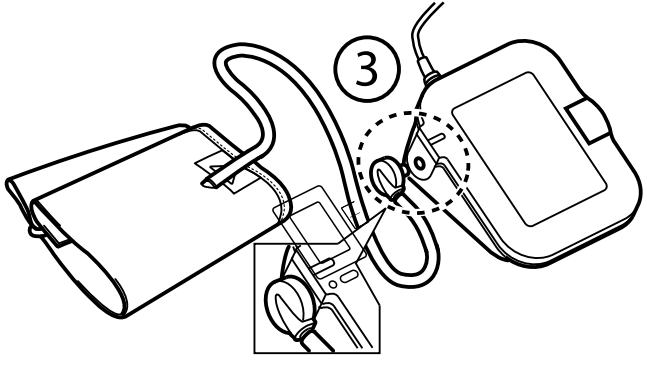
Measure your upper arm – midway between your elbow and your shoulder – with a cloth measuring tape.

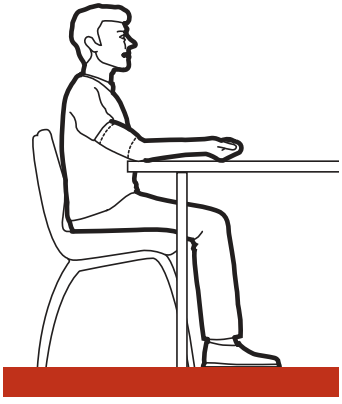
- LESS than 9 inches = Small
- 9–13 inches = Standard
- GREATER than 13 inches = Large

Getting ready

1. Insert the adapter plug into the jack on the back side of the monitor (1).
2. Plug the adapter into an outlet (2).
3. Insert the air plug from the cuff securely into the main unit (3).
4. Wipe the inside of the blood pressure cuff with a disinfectant wipe.

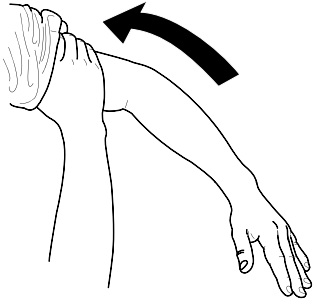


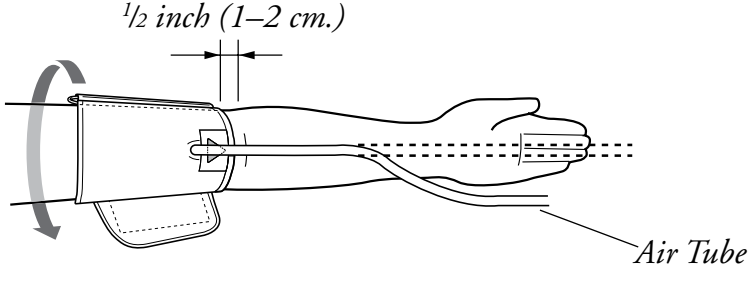




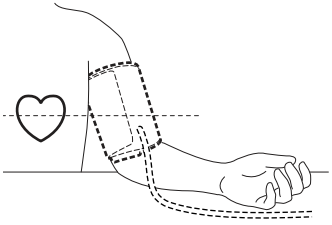
Readings can vary from arm to arm. Use the same arm each time you take your blood pressure.

5. Sit quietly in a chair for 5 minutes before measuring.
6. Keep your back supported and feet flat on the ground.
7. Remove tight-fitting clothing from your upper arm. The bottom of the cuff should be about a half inch above your elbow.
8. Refer to the picture on the cuff and wrap the cuff around your arm. Position it correctly and securely in place so that it does not pinch. If you can move it on your arm after wrapping it, the cuff is **too loose**. If it pinches, the cuff is **too tight**.



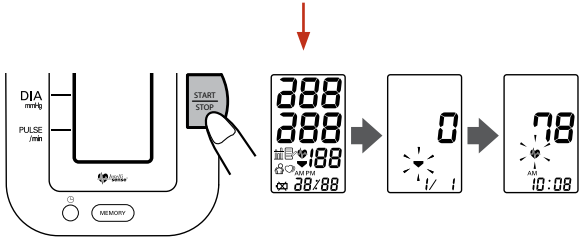


Taking your blood pressure



Blood pressure changes during the day, so it is best to take your readings at the same time every day.

1. Support your arm at the level of your heart on a table or high armrest. Stay in a seated position and avoid talking when taking a measurement.
2. Press the START button to start the monitor. Display symbols will appear on the screen. The cuff will inflate on its own and feel tight for a few seconds.
3. The cuff will relax and display the reading. **Record the reading.**
4. Press the STOP button to clear the display.



5. Wait two minutes.
6. Repeat these steps. Take two more readings, each two minutes apart. **You should have a total of three readings.**

Know your numbers – write them down!

The monitor will measure your top (*systolic*) and bottom (*diastolic*) blood pressure numbers, and your pulse rate.

120 ← Systolic
80 ← Diastolic

1. **To get your average reading**, add the top numbers and divide by three, then add the bottom numbers and divide by three.
2. Track your blood pressure by writing the date and the average reading on the chart at the back of this booklet.

   If the reading is very different from what you expected, please see your doctor to confirm the reading.

You *can* control your blood pressure

- We recommend that you take your blood pressure monitor to your medical provider's office twice a year to check accuracy.
- Work with your medical provider to monitor and control your blood pressure.

What the numbers mean

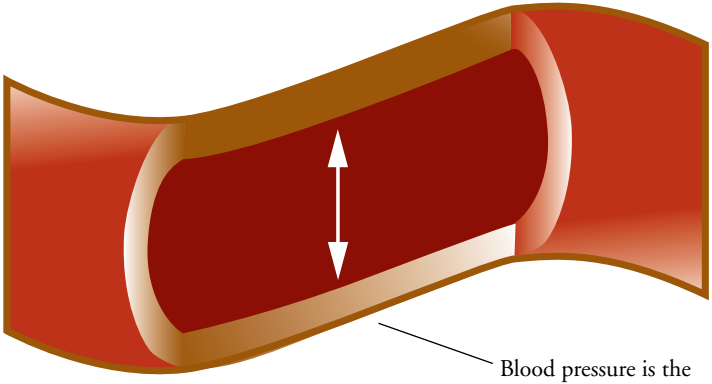
Within Healthy Range: Less than 120 *systolic* Less than 80 *diastolic*	Excellent! This is right where it should be and is a normal blood pressure.*
Approaching High Risk: 120–139 *systolic* 80–89 *diastolic*	This is getting up there. You should recheck it within 2 weeks and begin lifestyle changes that can help keep it from becoming full blown hypertension.*
In High Range: **See a doctor soon** 140–170 *systolic* 90–100 *diastolic*	Your blood pressure is high. You should see a doctor.*
High Reading: **Seek medical care now** 170 or higher *systolic* 100 or higher *diastolic*	Your blood pressure is **very** high. Seek medical care now!*

*Health advice from the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, Washington State Department of Health

Blood pressure and your heart

What is blood pressure?

- It is the force (pressure) of the blood in the main arteries generated by the pumping action of the heart.
- When taking a blood pressure, two pressures are measured, *systolic* and *diastolic*.



Blood pressure is the measurement of force applied to artery walls

Systolic

The pressure in the arteries that occurs when the heart contracts. **It is the top and the larger of the two numbers** reported in a blood pressure reading.

Diastolic

The pressure in the arteries when the heart is relaxed and filling with blood. **It is the lower of the two numbers** reported in a blood pressure reading.

Blood pressure readings are usually given as two numbers. For example, 110 over 70 (written as 110/70).

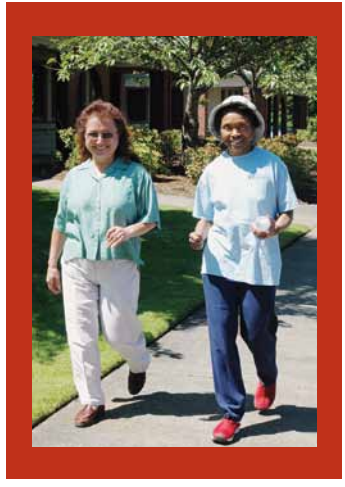
It's important to control your blood pressure

High blood pressure – hypertension – is a leading cause of heart attack, stroke, heart failure, and kidney failure. Many people have high blood pressure and do not know it. It is often called the "silent killer" because there are rarely symptoms. More than 7 million people in the United States die each year because of high blood pressure.

Control your blood pressure by making lifestyle changes

You can make simple changes to control your blood pressure and be heart-healthy and stroke-free.

- **Quit smoking.**
  - Check out www.quitline.com.
  - Talk to your doctor about medications that may help you quit.
- **Control your weight.**
  - If you are overweight, even a small weight loss can lower your blood pressure.
- **Move more – exercise.**
  - 30 minutes of moderate activity, such as walking, 5 days a week can lower your blood pressure.



- **Eat a diet low in salt.**
  - Read food labels.
  - Select foods with no more than 400 mg of sodium (salt) per serving, or foods with no more than 10 percent of daily value of sodium per serving.
  - Avoid foods that have salt listed as one of the first 10 ingredients.
  - Watch out for hidden salt found in compounds used in making foods. Many processed foods are high in sodium (salt).
  - Eat no more than 2000 mg (that's about 1 teaspoon of table salt) of sodium per day. Most Americans eat more than twice this much each day.
- **Limit alcohol to two drinks per day.**
- **Control your diabetes.**
- **Control your cholesterol.**

To learn more:

Quitline.com: 1-800-QUIT-NOW

American Heart Association: www.HeartHub.org

More copies

To print online: http://here.doh.wa.gov

To order copies: 360-236-3695

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following organizations for contributing to this manual:

- American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
- Omron Healthcare, Inc.
- Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, Washington State Department of Health

Health advice in this manual is given by the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, Washington State Department of Health.

Special thanks to Omron Healthcare, Inc. for use of their illustrations in this manual and for technical advice for presenting instructions.

What's the **big deal** about controlling my blood pressure?

Small changes can make a huge difference:

- A 30-minute walk every day can drop your blood pressure 10 points.
- Losing 5–10 pounds can drop your blood pressure 5 or more points.
- Quitting smoking can drop your blood pressure 5–10 points.
- Every 5 points decrease in blood pressure reduces:
  – risk of stroke by 34%
  – risk of heart attack by 21%
- Every 3 points decrease in blood pressure reduces:
  – risk of stroke by 8%
  – risk of heart attack by 5%

Health care provider:

_____

_____

Provider phone:

_____

Washington State Department of Health
DOH 345-274 March 2011

Blood Pressure Tracker

Date	My Blood Pressure	Date	My Blood Pressure
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____
_____	_____/_____	_____	_____/_____

My goal blood pressure:

_____/_____

Healthy Communities Washington

Healthy people in healthy places

PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND HEALTHIER WASHINGTON

Washington State Department of Health

DOH 345-273 March 2011