Home Blood Pressure Monitoring

Where can I buy a home blood pressure monitor?
You can buy a home blood pressure monitor at a drugstore, department store, or medical supply store.

Make sure that your monitor:
› Is totally automatic and has a memory
› Has an arm cuff that is worn on your upper arm
› Has an arm cuff that is the right size for you
› Is approved by Blood Pressure Canada

To find the right cuff size, measure your bare upper arm halfway between your shoulder and elbow. Choose the cuff size that fits your arm best. Too small a cuff will give a false high reading and too large a cuff will give a false low reading.

Take your monitor to your doctor’s office once or twice a year to compare your monitor’s readings with your doctor’s readings.
Why do I need to take my blood pressure at home?

Checking your blood pressure at home will help you be sure that your high blood pressure is under control. Keep track of your blood pressure between doctor’s visits.

Keeping your blood pressure under control will help prevent heart disease, strokes, vision problems, kidney disease, and other problems.

What do the blood pressure numbers mean?

The top number is called the **systolic** blood pressure. It is the force made by the blood on the walls of the arteries when the heart beats or pumps.

The lower number, the **diastolic** blood pressure, is the force made by the blood on the walls of the arteries when the heart rests between beats.

Both systolic and diastolic pressures are important.
What should my blood pressure numbers be?

If you do not have diabetes or kidney disease, your average blood pressure should be below 135/85.

If you do have diabetes, your average blood pressure should be below 130/80.

How do I take my blood pressure?

When you check your blood pressure at home or in the doctor’s office, follow these steps:

1. Go to the bathroom, if needed.
2. Use the same arm every time.
3. Sit on a chair beside a table. This could be a kitchen or dining room table, or a desk.
4. Put the cuff on your bare upper arm (if your top has long or tight sleeves, take it off). The cuff must be snug but not tight (2 fingers should fit between the cuff and your arm) and positioned 1/2 to 1 inch above the bend in your elbow.
5. Sit quietly for 5 minutes with your back resting against the back of the chair. Do not talk. Keep both feet flat on the floor and your cuffed arm resting on the table. The cuff must be at the level of your heart.
6. Take one reading.
7. Continue to sit quietly. Wait for 1-2 minutes and then take a second reading.

8. Continue to sit quietly. Wait for 1-2 more minutes and then take a third reading.

9. After 3 readings, find your average blood pressure. Use the second and third readings to get the most accurate number.

   › Add the second and third systolic (top) numbers and divide by 2. This is your average systolic blood pressure.

   › Add the second and third diastolic (bottom) numbers and divide by 2. This is your average diastolic blood pressure.

**Example:**

Reading #1: 132/82

Reading #2: **126/78**

Reading #3: **118/76**

Average systolic blood pressure:

\[
\frac{126 + 118}{2} = 122
\]

Average diastolic blood pressure:

\[
\frac{78 + 76}{2} = 77
\]

Average blood pressure: **122/77**
When should I check my blood pressure at home?
If your doctor has asked you to keep a record of your blood pressure, check it:
• After you start taking a new medicine.
• After a change in how much medicine you take.
• When you stop taking a medicine.
• Twice a day (morning and evening) for 7 days before you see your doctor.

Do not take your blood pressure:
• If you have had caffeine (tea, coffee, cola, hot chocolate), smoked a cigarette, or exercised less than 1 hour ago.
• If you have just eaten, or are eating, chewing, or drinking.
• If you are upset, anxious, excited, or in pain.
• If you are in a place that is noisy or uncomfortable.
• If you have an irregular pulse due to atrial fibrillation or other abnormal heart rhythm.