



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™



Toolbox Talks

How to Take Your Own Blood Pressure

AHA Recommendation:

Over half of Americans have high blood pressure. The American Heart Association recommends home monitoring for all people with high blood pressure to help the healthcare provider determine whether treatments are working. Home monitoring (self-measured blood pressure) is not a substitute for regular visits to your physician. If you have been prescribed medication to lower your blood pressure, don't stop taking your medication without consulting your doctor, even if your blood pressure readings are in the normal range during home monitoring.

Using a home blood pressure monitor

- Don't take the measurement over clothes.
- Be still. Don't smoke, drink caffeinated beverages or exercise within 30 minutes before measuring your blood pressure. Ensure 5 minutes of quiet rest before measurements.
- Sit correctly, with your back straight and supported. Your feet should be flat on the floor and your legs should not be crossed. Your arm should be supported on a flat surface with the upper arm at heart level. Make sure the bottom of the cuff is placed directly above the bend of the elbow.
- Measure at the same time every day.
- Each time you measure, take two or three readings one minute apart and record the results in a notebook or using an online tracker.
- A single high reading is not an immediate cause for alarm. If you get a reading that is slightly or moderately higher than normal, take your blood pressure a few more times and consult your healthcare professional.
- If your blood pressure readings suddenly exceed 180/120 mm Hg, wait five minutes and test again. If your readings are still unusually high, contact your doctor immediately. You could be experiencing a hypertensive crisis.
- If your blood pressure is higher than 180/120 mm Hg and you are experiencing signs of possible organ damage such as chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness/weakness, change in vision, difficulty speaking, do not wait to see if your pressure comes down on its own. Call 9-1-1.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Where can I get a blood pressure cuff?

Most drug stores have blood pressure cuffs for home monitoring.

Discussion Questions:

- Which of the tips to monitor blood pressure effectively surprised you?