Self-Measured Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries as your heart pumps blood. When blood flows through your arteries at higher than normal pressures, you may have **high blood pressure**, also known as **hypertension**. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States.

Half of all Americans have high blood pressure and many don't even know it. Adults should have their blood pressure checked by a healthcare provider. If your numbers are high, your healthcare provider may suggest self-measuring your blood pressure outside of the doctor's office. Blood pressure is measured using two numbers. Systolic is the first number and is the pressure when blood is pumped out of the heart. Diastolic is the second number and is the pressure between heartbeats when the heart is filling with blood.

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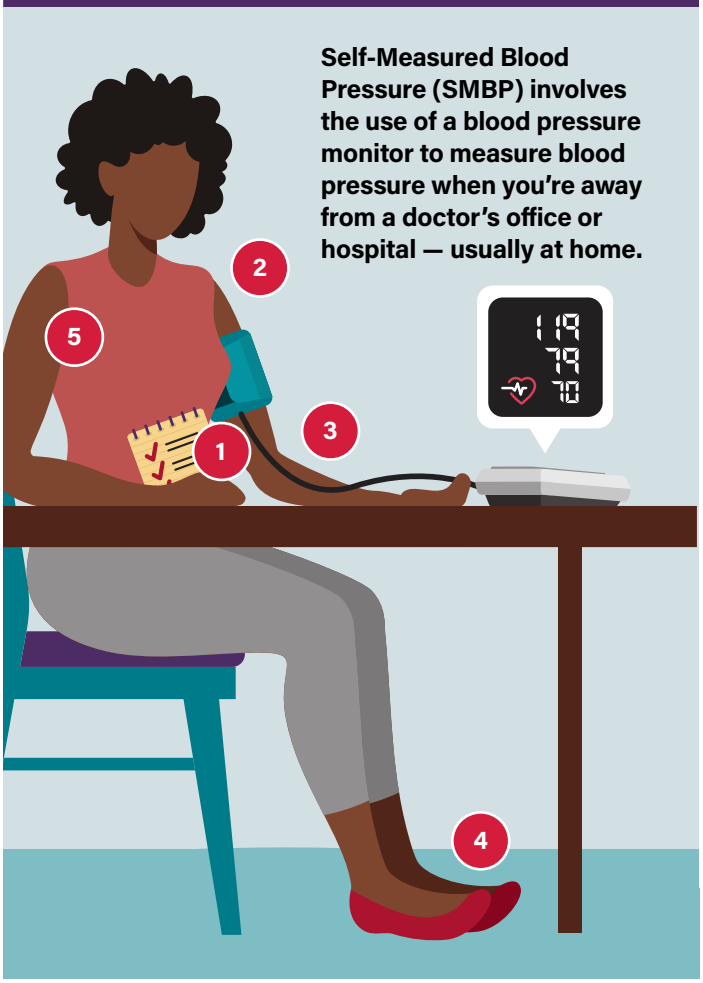


Follow these tips to measure your blood pressure at home.

1. Prepare for your blood pressure reading:
   - **Avoid exercising, eating a meal, drinking caffeine, or smoking** for 30 min before.
   - If you are on **blood pressure medication,** measure your blood pressure **before** you take your medication.
   - **Go to the bathroom** and empty your bladder beforehand.
   - **Find a quiet space** with a table and chair and no distractions.
   - **Sit and relax for 5 minutes** before taking your blood pressure reading.
2. **Uncover your upper arm** and put the blood pressure cuff above the elbow and mid-arm. Do not put the cuff over your clothing.
3. **Rest your arm on the table** so it's supported and the blood pressure cuff around your upper arm is located at heart level. Keep your arm supported and your palms up.
4. While taking your reading, make sure your **feet are uncrossed** and **flat on the floor**.
5. **Sit up straight in a chair**—make sure your back is supported. **Stay calm and relaxed**. Don't talk or watch TV while taking your reading.

Measuring your blood pressure at home is simple and effective. Studies have shown that self-measured blood pressure along with clinical support can help people with hypertension lower their blood pressure.

Take more than one measurement

To make sure your results are the same, **take two to three measurements 1 minute apart each time.**

Also, try taking your blood pressure at **the same time(s) each day.**

Set targets

Work with your doctor to set blood pressure numbers that are healthy for you. **Typically, a healthy blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg.**

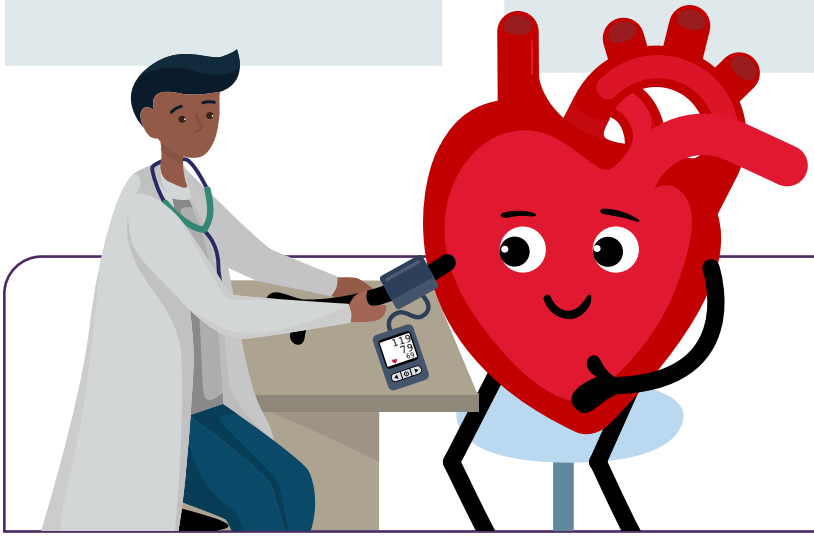
If your reading is **higher**, talk with your doctor about how to **lower or control it.**

Record and track your measurements

You may be diagnosed with high blood pressure **based on your medical history** and if your blood pressure readings are **consistently higher than 130/80 mm Hg.**

Ask your doctor what your target numbers should be and how often to check it.

Use the **Blood Pressure Tracker** to record your numbers.



There's a lot you can do to control your blood pressure.
Learn more from *The Heart Truth*® at nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension