

# How To Check Your Blood Pressure



## What is Blood Pressure (BP)?

Blood pressure is the force of the blood on the walls of the blood vessels as it moves through them. Blood pressure is the result of two forces:

- **Systolic Pressure**  
When the heart pumps blood out into the body
- **Diastolic Pressure**  
When the heart rests between beats

## → Getting Ready To Check Your Blood Pressure

- Empty your bladder.
- Sit quietly for at least 5 minutes before, and don't talk while taking your blood pressure.
- Sit on a chair with your back supported and your feet on the floor.
- Do not cross your legs or ankles.
- Make sure your upper arm is at heart level.
- Don't take your blood pressure within 30 minutes of eating, drinking caffeine, smoking or exercising.

## → Taking a Blood Pressure Reading

- Roll up your sleeve. Always put the blood pressure cuff over bare skin.
- Rest your arm on a table at heart level with your palm facing up.
- Place the bottom of the cuff just above the bend in your elbow.
- Take your blood pressure 2 times, with at least 1 minute in between. Good times to check your blood pressure are in the morning before medication and in the evening before dinner.
- Check your blood pressure in both arms the first few times because blood pressure readings may be higher in one arm than the other. Going forward, make it a habit to check your blood pressure on the arm with the higher reading.
- Check your blood pressure more often after medication changes and in the week before clinic visits.



## How do I upload my results to GHCMYChart<sup>SM</sup> ?

You must have GHCMYChart<sup>SM</sup> activated. To log your home blood pressure readings via GHCMYChart<sup>SM</sup>:

- Log into GHCMYChart<sup>SM</sup>.
- Click on the **"Menu"** button in the upper-left-corner.
- Select **"Track My Health"** found under "My Record."
- Under active flow sheets, click **"Patient Entered Blood Pressure."**
- Click **"Add New Data."**
- Fill out the date, time, systolic and diastolic blood pressure readings and save.

Your health care provider will be able to see you track your blood pressure readings. This will help your care team give you the best care when monitoring your bloodpressure medications.

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Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin (GHC-SCW)  
MK18-53-1(4.21)FL

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## ➔ Choosing a Home Blood Pressure Monitor

- Choose a monitor that automatically inflates, with a cuff that fits around the upper arm.
- Wrist and finger monitors are not recommended because they are not reliable.
- Features to consider:
  - Can you easily read the numbers on the display?
  - Is the cuff the correct size for your arm?
  - How many readings can be stored in the monitor's memory?
  - Do you want to be able to download readings to your computer?
- A couple of popular and relatively affordable monitors are:
  - Omron 5 Series (BP742N)
  - iHealth Ease (BP3L)
- No matter which monitor you choose, bring your blood pressure monitor with you to your clinic at least once a year to compare readings from your monitor to the clinic's device. Sometimes, readings taken from home blood pressure monitors are lower than the ones from the clinic.

## ➔ Understanding Your Blood Pressure Numbers

- Your blood pressure is the force of the blood on the walls of the blood vessels as it moves through them.
- Blood pressure is expressed using two numbers: systolic and diastolic.
- The systolic (top) number is the pressure when your heart contracts, or “beats.”
- The diastolic (bottom) number is the pressure when your heart relaxes, between “beats.”
- An ideal blood pressure for most people is less than 130/80, but some people may have a goal of less than 140/90 or less than 150/90.
- Talk to your provider about your blood pressure goal.

Although symptoms may not show, uncontrolled high blood pressure (also known as hypertension), can lead to many problems such as:

- Vision loss
- Stroke
- Kidney disease
- Heart attack/heart failure
- Sexual dysfunction

There are many things you can do to keep your blood pressure under control, including:

- Taking your medications properly
- Eating a low sodium diet ([dashdiet.org](http://dashdiet.org))
- Being active for 30 minutes a day
- Limiting alcohol
- Managing stress
- Quitting smoking
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Checking your blood pressure regularly

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