

# Measuring Your Blood Pressure at Home

Measuring your blood pressure at home provides important information about your heart health. Follow these steps to get started. If you have any questions, contact your healthcare team.

## Choose a Home Blood Pressure Monitor

- **Buy a monitor with an arm cuff.** Most pharmacies sell automatic blood pressure monitors. Well-known national brands include Omron®, A&D and Microlife.® Don't buy a monitor with a wrist or finger cuff, which are not as accurate. Ask the pharmacist if you have questions.
- **Make sure the arm cuff fits.** Before you buy a blood pressure monitor, measure your arm so you can be sure the cuff will fit. Use a string or measuring tape to measure around the circumference of your upper arm, halfway between your elbow and shoulder.
- **Make sure your monitor works correctly.** Bring it in to your healthcare team when you first buy it and then once a year afterward. In addition, bring your monitor to get checked if your home measurements are regularly 10 mmHg different (higher or lower) than those at your healthcare visits.

## Get the Most Out of Measuring Your Blood Pressure

- **Know your goal.** Talk to your healthcare team about what your blood pressure goal should be. A common goal is a systolic blood pressure (top number) lower than 130 and a diastolic (bottom number) lower than 80—written as 130/80.
- **Know how to take your blood pressure correctly.** See next page for directions. It's also a good idea to have your healthcare team show you the correct way to take your blood pressure.
- **Keep a log.** Track your blood pressure with the date, time, reading and notes. Share your log with your healthcare team at all regular visits.
- **Try to figure out why your measurements go up and down.** If you find your blood pressure is higher or lower than usual, try to understand why. Was there anything different about your day? Your blood pressure can be affected by many things, such as changes in your medication, salt in your food, caffeine, alcohol, physical activity and stress.
- **Know when to call your healthcare team.** Make a plan with your healthcare team about when to call about your blood pressure.



## Sutter Resources

- Talk to your healthcare team about measuring your blood pressure at home. They can teach you how to use your monitor and measure your blood pressure correctly.
- Go to [sutterhealth.org](https://www.sutterhealth.org) to learn more about high blood pressure. Find local resources by going to [sutterhealth.org/classes-events](https://www.sutterhealth.org/classes-events) and selecting the topic “Heart Health.”

## Watch the video on how to take blood pressure.

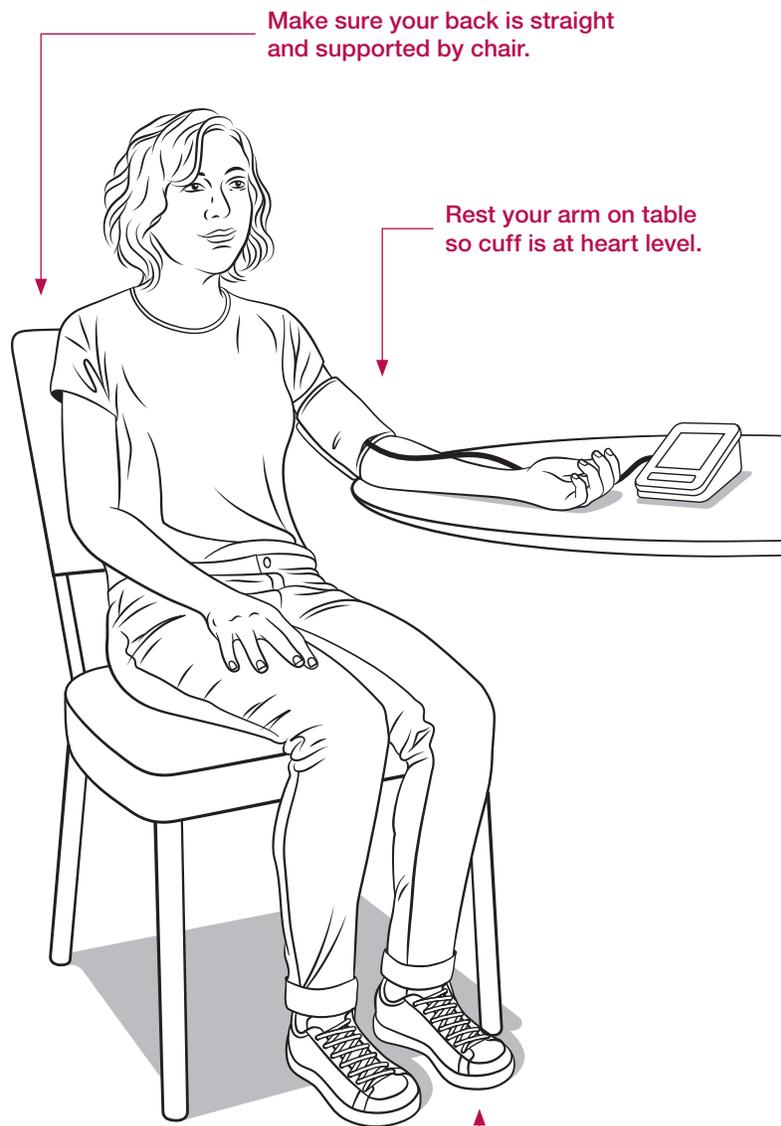
Go to [targetbp.org](https://www.targetbp.org) and search “blood pressure video” for a 4-minute instructional video on how to measure your blood pressure at home.

Target BP™ is an initiative of the American Heart Association and American Medical Association.

# How to Measure Your Blood Pressure Correctly

Follow these steps to correctly measure your blood pressure. If you have questions, contact your healthcare team.

- 1 Don't drink caffeine (such as coffee), exercise or smoke for at least 30 minutes before taking your blood pressure.
- 2 Use the restroom and empty your bladder before sitting down.
- 3 Sit comfortably with both feet flat on the floor **for five minutes** before taking your blood pressure. Sit with your back straight and supported (on a dining chair, for example, instead of a sofa).
- 4 Rest your arm on a table so the blood pressure cuff is about the same height as your heart (the middle of your chest). Unless otherwise directed, you may use either arm, but use the same arm each time.
- 5 Wrap the cuff around your bare upper arm (not over clothing). Place the bottom of the cuff directly above the bend of the elbow.
- 6 Don't talk or do other activities while measuring your blood pressure.
- 7 Follow the instructions for your monitor to take two to three readings at least one minute apart.
- 8 Keep a log of all your measurements, including the date, time of day, and comments about daily activity, food and emotions.



Make sure your back is straight and supported by chair.

Rest your arm on table so cuff is at heart level.

Sit with your legs uncrossed and both feet flat on ground.

## When to Measure

Plan to take your blood pressure:

- At least three times per week unless otherwise directed.
- At the same place and time(s). Good times to measure are in the morning before taking medications and in the evening before dinner.
- After a change in treatment (such as new medication) and the week before a regular medical appointment.