

# CHECK YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE AT HOME

Blood pressure measures how hard blood pushes against the walls of your arteries. Arteries are vessels that bring blood to all the parts of your body.

## HEALTH NOTES



### For more information:

#### Visit [kp.org/heart](http://kp.org/heart)

- Learn how to keep your heart healthy.

#### Visit [kp.org/healthylifestyles](http://kp.org/healthylifestyles)

- Healthy Lifestyle online programs, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

#### Healthy Living Classes

- To register call Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., (301) 816-6565 or 1-800-444-6696.  
For TTY, dial 711.
  - » Healthier Living Workshops
  - » Commit to Quit

#### Nutrition Classes

- To register call Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., (703) 359-7878 or 1-800-777-7904, TTY: (301) 359-7616 or 1-800-700-4901.

### Understanding your blood pressure

Blood pressure changes with:

- the strength of the heartbeat,
- the amount of blood in the body,
- the ability of the blood vessels to expand and contract, and
- your age and general health.

It's normal for your blood pressure to go up and down throughout the day. However, if it stays up, you have high blood pressure, also called hypertension.

Your blood pressure consists of two numbers:

- The top number shows how hard the blood pushes when the heart is pumping and is called systolic pressure. The first number will always be higher than the second number.
- The bottom shows how much the blood vessels relax when the heart is relaxed and filling with blood and is called diastolic pressure.

Healthy blood pressure should be less than 119 systolic and 79 diastolic (119/79). If you have CKD or Diabetes, your target should be 139/89. If you are 60 years or older and have high blood pressure, your goal is 149/89 or lower.

### Reach your goal!

Congratulations on taking steps to check your blood pressure at home. When you and your doctor work together to reach your blood pressure goals, you are more likely to achieve them. That means you reduce the chance of stroke and heart attack. It is important to know that blood pressure readings are almost never exactly the same from one time to the next. But if you take your blood pressure enough times, you will get a good idea of your average blood pressure. Use this number as a guide for your true blood pressure numbers.

### Know your blood pressure goals

Your blood pressure goals will depend on your current health. Be sure to talk with your doctor about what your blood pressure goal should be.

## Getting ready to take your blood pressure

Be sure you have a blood pressure cuff that fits you. The cuff should be placed just above the elbow.

- Do not eat, use tobacco products, drink coffee, or exercise for at least 30 minutes before taking your blood pressure.
- Use the bathroom if necessary. If you have a full bladder, your blood pressure reading may be higher than usual.
- Do not take your blood pressure if you are nervous or upset.
- Rest at least 5 minutes before taking your blood pressure.

### How to sit

- Sit in a chair with support for your back. Rest your arm on a table so that your upper arm is on the same level as your heart.
- Sit with your arm slightly bent with palm up. Keep your feet flat on the floor and your legs uncrossed.

## How to get correct readings on your blood pressure monitor

- When you purchase a blood pressure monitor, bring it to the doctor's office to compare the reading you get at home with the reading taken in the office. Results should be close. Repeat this check yearly to make sure your machine is working properly.
- Check your blood pressure cuff and rubber tubing often. Make sure they are in good condition and do not have any holes or cracks.

## How to use electronic blood pressure monitors

- Press the on/off button on the electronic monitor. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for using the device.
- The blood pressure cuff will automatically inflate to about 180 mmHg (unless the monitor decides you need a higher number). Then the cuff will begin to deflate automatically and the numbers on the screen will begin to drop.
- Wait at least one minute before taking another blood pressure reading.

## Healthy Lifestyles programs

Achieve balance with personalized plans designed to reshape your way of life and improve your health.

- HealthMedia® Care® for Your Health to manage your condition
- HealthMedia® Balance® to manage weight and get physically active
- HealthMedia® Nourish® to eat better
- HealthMedia® Relax® to reduce stress
- HealthMedia® Breathe® to stop tobacco use

## EMMI programs

- EMMI programs are meant to help you learn more about conditions such as high blood pressure and how to manage it. Visit your doctor's home page at [kp.org/doctor](http://kp.org/doctor) and choose the link on the right side to find the program on Hypertension.

## Resources

- Check out the American Heart Association website at [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org)
- Visit the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute at [nhlbi.gov](http://nhlbi.gov)

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent medical problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor or member of your health care team.