



**Florida
Health Care
Plans**



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Home monitoring helps control blood pressure

Checking your blood pressure at home is an important part of managing high blood pressure (hypertension). Not only does it help you to keep track, it can help make certain your medication is working and alert you and your doctors to potential health problems.

Blood pressure monitors are available without a prescription. No matter what brand you choose, proper use requires some practice and training. Arm cuffs are considered more accurate – we recommend against wrist or finger devices. Follow these tips to help ensure accuracy when you measure your blood pressure at home:

- Before using a monitor for the first time, have your doctor or nurse check its accuracy against the office model. Also have your doctor or nurse watch how you use the device so that he or she can see if you're doing it properly.
- Take your blood pressure at consistent times, such as in the morning and in the evening.
- Use the same arm whenever you take your blood pressure. Note that many digital monitors are meant for use only on the left arm.
- Don't measure your blood pressure immediately after you wake in the morning. Wait an hour or so. If you exercise after waking, take your blood pressure before exercising.
- Avoid food, caffeine, tobacco and alcohol for 30 minutes before taking a measurement.
- Go to the toilet first. A full bladder can increase blood pressure slightly.
- Sit quietly for three to five minutes before taking a measurement.
- Sit in a comfortable position with your legs and ankles uncrossed and your back supported against a chair.
- Rest your arm, raised to the level of your heart, on a table, desk or chair arm. You may need to place a pillow or cushion under your arm to elevate it high enough.
- Don't talk while taking your blood pressure.

- Place the cuff on bare skin, not over clothing. Rolling up a sleeve until it tightens around your arm can result in an inaccurate reading, so you may need to slip your arm out of the sleeve.
- Take a repeat reading two to three minutes after the first one to check accuracy.
- If your monitor doesn't automatically log blood pressure readings or heart rates, write them down in your own log.
- Take the monitor to your doctors' office annually to check its accuracy against the office model. If you drop the device or damage it, it may no longer work properly.

Long-term payoffs

If your blood pressure is well controlled, you may need to check it at home only a few days each month. If you're just starting home monitoring, if you're making any changes in your medications or other treatments, or if you have another health problem, such as diabetes, you may need to check it more often.

Home blood pressure monitoring is not a substitute for visits to your doctor. Even if you get normal readings, don't stop or change your medications or alter your diet without talking to your doctor first.

Monitoring your blood pressure at home doesn't have to be complicated or inconvenient. You might even find that you enjoy tracking your readings and that home monitoring gives you more control over your condition. And in the long run, you may risk fewer complications related to high blood pressure and enjoy a healthier life.

What is a normal BP or “controlled”?

A blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher is considered high. If you are between 120/80 mmHg and 139/89 mmHg, then you have *prehypertension*. A normal blood pressure is when the systolic or top number is *less than 120* and the diastolic or bottom number is *less than 80*.

Home Blood Pressure Machine

Enclosed is a coupon to assist in the purchase of a home blood pressure monitoring machine. A machine is available at the FHCP pharmacies for you to purchase.

FHCP encourages you to monitor your blood pressure at home; write down your readings on the enclosed form and bring the results with you to all your doctor appointments.

For more information, visit our website at www.fhcp.com. Here you will find other valuable resources. Or you can call us at 386 / 676 – 7100 ext. 7788. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The hearing impaired may call TRS Relay 711.