

# Checking Your Blood Pressure at Home

*During and after pregnancy*

## How do I measure my blood pressure?

It's important to take the readings at the same time each day, such as morning and evening. Take your blood pressure before taking any morning medications.

### *How to get the most accurate reading*

30 minutes before checking your blood pressure, avoid the following:

- Drinking caffeine
- Drinking alcohol
- Eating
- Smoking
- Exercising

5 minutes before checking your blood pressure:

- Use the bathroom and urinate so that you have an empty bladder.
- Sit still in a chair for around 5 minutes. Stay calm and relaxed and do not talk if possible.



## To check your blood pressure:

1. Sit up straight in a chair.
2. Place your feet on the floor. Don't cross your ankles or legs.
3. Rest your arm at the level of your heart on a table or desk or on the arm of a chair. Use the same arm every day.
4. Pull up your shirt sleeve. Don't take the measurement over clothes.
5. Wrap the blood pressure cuff around the upper part of your left arm, 1 inch (2.5 cm) above your elbow.
6. Fit the cuff snugly around your arm. You should be able to place only one finger between the cuff and your arm.
7. Position the cord so that it rests in the bend of your elbow.

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8. Press the power button.
9. Sit quietly while the cuff inflates and deflates.
10. Read the digital reading on the monitor screen and write the numbers down (record them) in a notebook.
11. Wait 2–3 minutes, then repeat the steps, starting at step 1.

### Which features do you need?

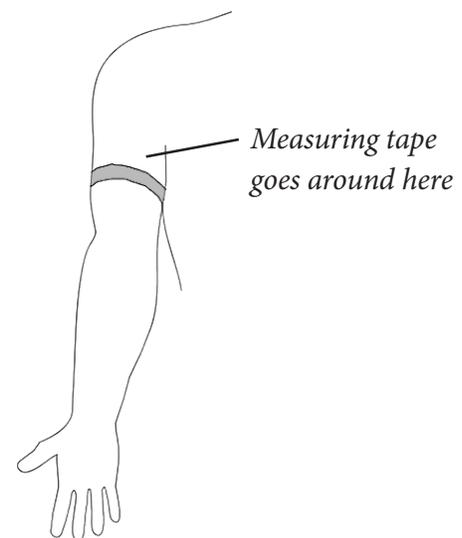
- Arm cuff monitors give the most exact readings.
- Wrist and finger blood pressure monitors are often less exact.
- Pick a blood pressure monitor that has passed tests to show they measure exactly. Blood pressure cuffs for sale in the U.S. that have passed tests are listed on the website [www.validatebp.org](http://www.validatebp.org).
- Some monitors that have passed tests are:
  - Omron 3 Series Upper Arm Blood Pressure Monitor (Model BP7100)
  - Omron 5 Series Upper Arm Blood Pressure Monitor (Model BP7200)
  - Omron 7 Series Upper Arm Blood Pressure Monitor (Model HEM-7320)
  - A&D Medical Upper Arm Blood Pressure Monitor with Talking Function (UA 1030T)
- Don't use smartphone apps. There are many smartphone apps that claim to check your blood pressure using the pulse in your wrist or finger. These don't work. They haven't passed any tests. Don't give your clinic a blood pressure reading from a smartphone app.

If you have a flexible spending account (FSA) or health savings account (HSA), you may wish to pay yourself back (reimburse) for the machine and cuff. A blood pressure monitor is an allowed over-the-counter (OTC) item to pay yourself back from these accounts.

### Cuff size

The size of the arm cuff is a key feature. Make sure the cuff is the right size for your arm. If the cuff isn't the right size, readings will either be too high or low.

- To know what size cuff to buy, measure the distance around your bicep (upper arm).
- Use a flexible measuring tape or paper ruler. Place the measuring tape halfway between your armpit and elbow. Measure the distance around your arm in inches.
- You may need to buy a cuff apart from the machine to get the right size.



### Cuff sizes and arm measurements

- **Small adult:** 22 to 26 cm (8.7 to 10.2 inches)
- **Adult:** 27 to 34 cm (10.6 to 13.4 inches)
- **Large adult:** 35 to 44 cm (13.8 to 17.3 inches)
- **Adult thigh:** 45 to 52 cm (17.7 to 20.5 inches)