

What do the numbers in blood pressure readings mean?

Blood pressure measurements consist of two numbers, the first (higher) number is called the systolic blood pressure and the second (lower) number is the diastolic blood pressure. The pulse is also recorded by all of the electronic machines. An example of a blood pressure measurement is 140/80 mmHg (millimeters of Mercury). This means 140 for systolic blood pressure (higher number) and 80 for diastolic blood pressure (lower number). A normal blood pressure is 140/90 for most people. A blood pressure of 135/80 is optimal for patients with:

- diabetes
- kidney disease
- retinopathy
- heart failure
- diseases that arise because of problems in blood circulation to the heart, brain and legs, including: coronary heart disease, peripheral arterial disease, or cerebrovascular disease.

A normal pulse is between 60-100 beats per minute (bpm) while at rest.

What if my blood pressure reading changes?

Blood pressure can vary or change for a number of reasons. Many factors can increase our blood pressure. Blood pressure can be high when:

- we are in pain or upset
- right after exercise (even walking)
- we are talking
- after using tobacco and caffeine products

High blood pressure due to these reasons does not predict future harm. (There are other dangers from using tobacco that you should keep in mind though.)

Blood pressure tends to be lower at night and lowest when we are sleeping. Blood pressure may vary by 50-70 mmHg for systolic (the upper number) and 20 mmHg diastolic (the lower number) depending on how it is measured. For example: if you measure your blood pressure while talking, after having a cigarette, or when you are upset you might get a reading of 190/100. When you re-measure the blood pressure in the proper setting, you will get a reading of 120/80. **The difference is not the fault of the machine; it is an error in the way the blood pressure measure was done.**

How do I measure my blood pressure correctly?

- Use a fully automatic or semi-automatic upper arm monitor.
- Do not use caffeine or tobacco, or exercise for 30 minutes before you measure.
- Do not use alcohol or eat for 2 hours before you measure.
- Measure your blood pressure when you first wake up and before dinner. (Unless your doctor tells you other times.)
- Before you measure your blood pressure, sit in a chair with a back on it for 3-5 minutes, and do not talk. Have paper and pen or the graph you received from your doctor ready to record your blood pressure.
- Use the correct sized cuff for your arm.
- Put the cuff in the proper place on your arm by placing the arrow or tubing on the inside of the elbow.
- Keep your arm at heart level while doing a blood pressure measure. You can rest your arm on a table in a comfortable place.
- If your blood pressure is high, you may repeat the reading and record the lowest of the two readings.

- Always measure your blood pressure on the first day of every month both in the morning and at night (unless your doctor tells you other times).

What should my blood pressure be when I am at home?

In your doctor's office your blood pressure should be less than 140/90. When you measure your blood pressure at home, it usually is somewhat lower because you are more relaxed at home. Your home blood pressure should usually be less than 140/90, if it is higher than that on average (most of the time) talk to your doctor. For certain medical conditions, lower blood pressure than 140/90 is advised. Talk to your doctor about what your target blood pressure should be.

How do I enter blood pressure readings in Patient Portal?

If you have a Bluetooth enabled home blood pressure monitoring device and an iPhone, you can automatically upload your blood pressure readings into your medical record by using the Patient Portal. If you do not have a Bluetooth enabled device or an iPhone, you can enter your blood pressure readings through the Patient Portal on a computer. You can find video instructions on how to upload or enter your results in the Patient Portal in the “Track My Health” section of the Patient Portal.

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