

Blood Pressure Management After Ischemic Stroke or Transient Ischemic Attack

High blood pressure (hypertension) is the leading cause of stroke and Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA). It is also the most important controllable risk factor to prevent another stroke or TIA. This handout provides simple steps to help you control your blood pressure and reduce your risk of another stroke or TIA.

What steps can I take to successfully monitor my blood pressure at home?

1. Purchase a blood pressure unit (see below).
2. Understand your blood pressure goals (page 2).
3. Understand how to properly monitor your blood pressure at home (page 3).
4. Use a home blood pressure log (page 4).

What do I need to consider when buying a home blood pressure unit?

There are many different machines available for home blood pressure monitoring. Here are some key points to look for when buying a new unit:

- Use only upper arm (not wrist or finger) units. Only upper arm units produce reliable measurements.
- Fully automatic electronic units are the easiest to use.
- Omron 3+, 5+, and 7+ series are recommended, as they have been validated by the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (AAMI) to be accurate. Visit <https://www.validatebp.org/> for a detailed list of blood pressure monitors which have been validated for accuracy.
- Purchase and use the correct sized cuff for your arm. This is guided by the measurement of the middle part of your upper arm (circumference). Most units recommend cuff size based on this measurement. If you have

a large upper arm, buy a large blood pressure cuff. Omron and A&D both offer larger cuffs for their machines.

- My upper arm circumference is _____ inches on my **right** arm or **left** arm (circle which arm you measured)
- You can purchase units at most local pharmacies and through many online resources.
- You can ask your provider for a prescription to obtain a home blood pressure unit. Coverage depends on your insurance provider.

What is my blood pressure goal?

- It is important to note that in the first few days following a stroke or TIA, your neurologist will likely allow your blood pressure to run slightly higher than normal. This is called **permissive hypertension**.
- After this period, the long-term target blood pressure goal is **less than 130/80 mmHg** for most stroke and TIA patients.
- There are some special circumstances in which your blood pressure goal might be slightly higher than this. It is important to talk to your neurology team to confirm your target blood pressure goal. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that you see your doctor or provider every 4 weeks until your blood pressure is controlled to goal.

How do I measure my blood pressure?

Use the detailed instructions in the infographic below to measure your blood pressure at home.

When should I notify a doctor?

- If your blood pressure is **above goal for 5 days in a row**.
- Call a doctor **immediately** if the systolic blood pressure (top number) is above **180** or the diastolic (bottom number) is above **120**.
- Remember to bring your log to your doctor's appointment.



What Steps Should I Take When Checking My Blood Pressure (BP) at Home?

Before

**2
Hours**

2 hours before your BP is taken:



No Alcohol



No Eating

**30
Min**

30 minutes before your BP is taken:



No Tobacco



No Caffeine



No Exercise

**5
Min**

5 minutes before your BP is taken:



Have log sheet ready to record BP



Sit still and relax in a chair with a back and don't talk for 5 minutes

Take home BP readings no more than twice a day, ideally between 6am-10am and 6pm-10pm. Take BP before or at the same time as taking high blood pressure medications.

During (When taking your BP)

- Use correct cuff size for your arm
- Put cuff on bare upper arm with arrow or tubing on inside of elbow
- Sit in a chair with your back straight and feet flat on the floor
- Support arm at heart level on a flat surface
- Do not talk while taking your BP



Record only the third BP Reading

- Take your blood pressure measurements three times in a row, waiting 30-60 seconds between each reading. Record only the third reading.
- Record measurements in your BP log



Home blood pressure log

My target blood pressure: _____/_____

Date	AM	PM	Notes

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