

Taking Your Blood Pressure At Home

There are several simple steps you should take to make sure that your home blood pressure readings are as accurate as possible.

Before you take your reading:

- There are many factors that can make your blood pressure rise for a short period of time. You should not smoke, have a drink containing caffeine (such as coffee) or exercise for 30 minutes before you take your blood pressure reading. You should also avoid measuring your blood pressure when you need to use the toilet.
- It is important that you always measure your blood pressure in the same arm. You should use the arm which your doctor or nurse uses when they take your blood pressure, or whichever arm they ask you to use.
- Do not wear any tight or restrictive clothing around the arm you are measuring your blood pressure in. For example, you should avoid rolling up tight shirt sleeves.
- You should rest for at least five minutes before measuring your blood pressure. During this time you should sit down in a quiet place, try to relax and avoid speaking to anyone.

Taking your reading:

- Place the cuff on your arm, following the instructions that came with your monitor. The bottom of the cuff should be approximately 2cm above the bend in your elbow.
- Make sure that you are sitting down when taking your blood pressure readings and that you have both of your feet flat on the floor. You should not cross your legs as this can raise your blood pressure. The arm that you are measuring your blood pressure in should be supported on a firm surface (such as a table or desk) with your palm facing up and should be at the same level as your heart.
- Take a reading, following the instructions that came with your monitor. When taking your blood pressure readings you should not talk and should try to relax.
- Take at least two readings, leaving at least a minute between each. After each measurement, you should write the reading down in your diary. Remember to write down the exact numbers that appear on the screen- do not round the numbers up or down. If the first two readings you take are very different, take 2 or 3 further readings. You should write all of your readings down in your blood pressure diary

When, how often and for how long should I monitor my blood pressure?

We would like you to monitor your blood pressure for 7 consecutive days.

On each day, you should monitor your blood pressure on two occasions: in the morning (between 6am and 12noon) and again in the evening (between 6pm and midnight). Try to take the readings at the same time every day. Each time you will need to take a minimum of two readings, leaving at least one minute between each. If the first two readings are very different, you should take 2 or 3 further readings. It is important that you do not check your blood pressure too often or become stressed and worried about your readings, as this could in fact make your blood pressure higher.

Blood pressure record chart

You should keep a blood pressure diary, clearly documenting all of your blood pressure readings (even if your monitor has a memory function), as well as the date and time at which each readings was taken. You will b given a blood pressure record chart by the health care assistant.

The numbers you write down should be the same as those that appear on the monitor screen: do not round the numbers up or down. You should also document anything that you think could have affected your readings, such as feeling unwell or changes in your medication. You do not need to write down your pulse/heart rate. Remember to take your diary with you to your next appointment/review.