

# Home blood pressure monitoring

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Home blood pressure monitoring is a valid way of monitoring and managing your blood pressure. It is an excellent method to empower you to take charge of your own management.

## Why do it?

Home blood pressure measurements give you a more accurate idea of what your blood pressure is in the real world. When people have their blood pressure measured by a doctor in a surgery it tends to be slightly higher. Therefore, home blood pressure monitoring allows your doctor to:

- more accurately diagnose and monitor your blood pressure
- see responses to lifestyle changes and medications.

## How do I do it?

- Measure your blood pressure twice after sitting quietly for five minutes. Do so according to the instructions of the machine you have. Measure at both 8 am and 8 pm (or near to those times according to what is convenient for you). This does not have to be done at home; it can be anywhere but the doctor's surgery.
- Take the measurements two minutes apart.
- Record the second measurement in the table overleaf or on a photocopy if you require more sheets.
- Bring these sheets to your next doctor's appointment.

## How can I keep my blood pressure down?

- Get regular exercise (walking is fine). Try to do 30 minutes of moderate exercise five days a week. This can be taken in 10 minute bouts if you can't spare 30 minutes at a time.
- Don't smoke; smoking does not cause high blood pressure but is an additive risk for heart disease and stroke.
- If you are overweight, try to reach your goal weight or at least aim for a 5 kg reduction. It is even more important for you to lose weight from around your waist. Women should aim for an 80 cm waist and men should aim for a 90 cm waist.
- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation (one standard drink a day for women and two standard drinks a day for men with two alcohol-free days a week).
- Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Don't add salt to your cooking or meals. Choose low-salt manufactured products from the supermarket. Look at the nutrition panel on the side of the packet and aim for a sodium content of 120 mg or less per 100 g or 100 mL.

## Purchasing a machine

A blood pressure machine can be purchased online or from a pharmacy or surgical supplies shop. Some health funds give a rebate for the purchase of the machine. Ask your doctor to write a letter stating that you have a condition for which home blood pressure monitoring is required and that they recommend the purchase of a blood pressure monitor.



**This handout provides advice on why home blood pressure monitoring is important and how to accurately record the measurements.**



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