

Blood Pressure Monitoring

PLEASE read the instruction manual in order to use this blood pressure monitor correctly and to apply the cuff correctly. If you need to change out the regular cuff for the larger cuff, you simply disconnect the tubing, transfer the connector piece to the tubing on the cuff that you are going to use and then reconnect it to the monitor. (It is a little tough to get out.) Please don't hesitate to ask your school health services staff for assistance.

Why Is It Important to Monitor My Blood Pressure:

- **Helps with early diagnosis.** Self-monitoring can help your doctor diagnose high blood pressure earlier than if you have only occasional blood pressure readings in a medical office. Self-monitoring is especially important if you have elevated blood pressure or another condition that could contribute to high blood pressure, such as diabetes or kidney problems.
- **Help track your treatment.** The only way to know whether your lifestyle changes or medications are working is to check your blood pressure regularly. Monitoring blood pressure changes can help you and your doctor make decisions about your treatment, such as adjusting dosages or changing medications. Use a log to keep track of your readings and share the log with your physician when you go in for an appointment.
- **Encourage better control.** Self-monitoring can give you a stronger sense of responsibility for your health. You may feel even more motivated to control your blood pressure with an improved diet, physical activity and proper medication use.
- **Cut your health care costs.** Self-monitoring might decrease your number of visits to your doctor or clinic.
- **Check if your blood pressure differs outside the doctor's office.** Some people experience spikes in blood pressure due to anxiety associated with seeing a doctor (white coat hypertension). Other people have normal blood pressure at a clinic but elevated pressure elsewhere (masked hypertension). Self-monitoring your blood pressure can help determine if you have true high blood pressure.

Tips for Accurate Use:

Not everyone can self-monitor blood pressure. If you have an irregular heartbeat, home blood pressure monitors might not give you an accurate reading.

The digital monitors that are most accurate are the type that are fitted on the upper arm.

Having a properly fitting cuff is the most important factor to consider in order to get an accurate blood pressure reading. Poorly fitting cuffs will not give accurate blood pressure measurements. Follow cuff size guidelines that are on the cuff. If you can't find a cuff big enough for your upper arm, ask your doctor about options for you and how they should be used. Your doctor might recommend taking your blood pressure at the same time each day. Other helpful tips:

- **Don't measure your blood pressure immediately after you wake up.** You can prepare for the day, but don't eat breakfast or take medications before measuring your blood pressure. If you exercise after waking up in the morning, take your blood pressure before exercising.
- **Avoid food, caffeine, tobacco and alcohol for 30 minutes before taking a measurement.** Also, go to the toilet first. A full bladder can increase blood pressure slightly.
- **Sit quietly before and during monitoring.** When you're ready to take your blood pressure, sit for a few minutes in a comfortable position with your legs and ankles uncrossed and your back supported against a chair. Try to be calm and not think about stressful things. Don't talk or move while taking your blood pressure.
- **Make sure your arm is positioned properly.** Always use the same arm when taking your blood pressure. Rest your arm, raised to the level of your heart, on a table, desk or chair arm.
- **Place the cuff on bare skin, not over clothing.** Rolling up a sleeve until it tightens around your arm can result in an inaccurate reading, so you may need to slip your arm out of the sleeve.
- **If you want to take a repeat reading,** wait for one to three minutes after the first reading before taking it again.
- Blood pressure varies throughout the day, and readings are often a little higher in the morning. Also, your blood pressure might be slightly lower when you are not in a medical setting, typically by about five points.

Keep a log of your readings and contact your doctor if you have any unusual or persistent increases in your blood pressure. Ask your doctor what reading should prompt an immediate call to the medical office.

Self-monitoring your blood pressure is not a substitute for visits to your doctor. Even if you get normal readings, don't stop or change your medications or alter your diet without talking to your doctor first.

Blood Pressure Monitoring Log

Name: _____ Birth date: _____

Contact info: (phone number and/or email): _____

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