How to check your

Blood Pressure

Table of Contents

How to check your blood pressure.....1
Getting ready 2
Taking your blood pressure.....4
Know your numbers – write them down! 5
What the numbers mean 6
Blood pressure and your heart 7
It's important to control your blood pressure.....8

Washington State Department of Health
DOH 345-268 March 2010

Healthy Communities Washington
Healthy people in healthy places

How to check your blood pressure

Follow these steps to make sure that you have an accurate reading.

Before you start

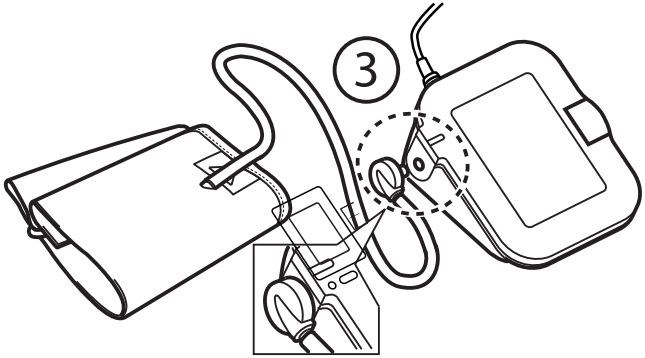
- **Do not drink coffee for at least 30 minutes before measuring.**
- **Do not use tobacco products for at least 30 minutes before measuring.**
- **Do not exercise or eat a large meal two hours before measuring.**
- **Use the rest room. A full bladder can affect the reading.**

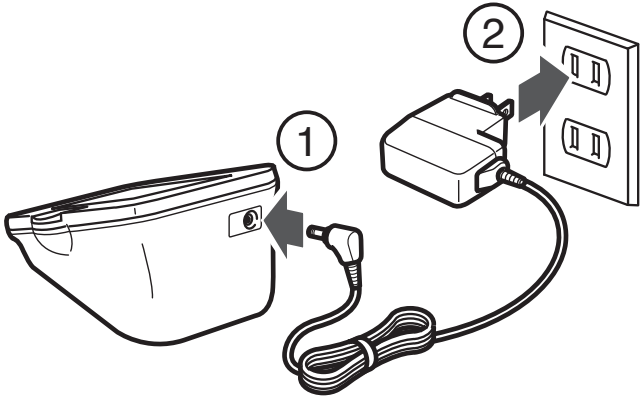
Questions or problems

- If you have any questions or problems with the monitor, contact your wellness coordinator or wellness committee representative.
- Please make a note on the comment sheet, so that we can check out any problems with the equipment. (See Omron's User Manual for Special Conditions.)

Getting ready

- Insert the adapter plug into the jack on the back side of the monitor (1).
- Plug the adapter into an outlet (2).
- Insert the air plug from the cuff securely into the main unit (3).





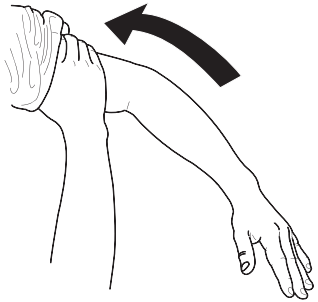
- **It is important to use the size of blood pressure cuff that fits your arm.**

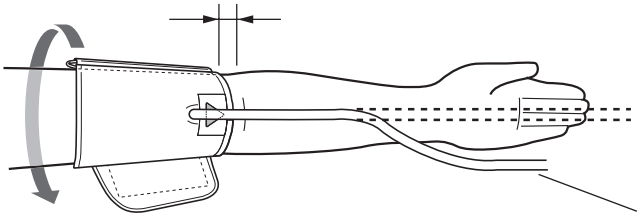
  Measure your upper arm – midway between your elbow and your shoulder – with a cloth measuring tape.

  - LESS than 9 inches = Small
  - 9–13 inches = Standard
  - GREATER than 13 inches = Large

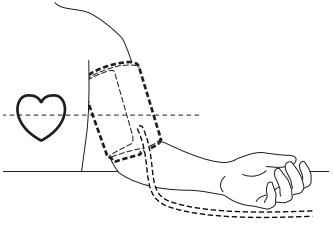
- Wipe the inside of the blood pressure cuff with a disinfectant wipe.

- Sit quietly in a chair for 5 minutes before measuring.
- Keep your back supported and feet flat on the ground.
- **Use the same arm each time you take your blood pressure.** Readings can vary from arm to arm.
- Remove tight-fitting clothing from your upper arm. The bottom of the cuff should be about a half inch above your elbow.
- Refer to the picture on the cuff and wrap the cuff around your arm. Position it correctly and securely in place so that it does not pinch. If you can move it on your arm after wrapping it, the cuff is **too loose**. If it pinches, the cuff is **too tight**.



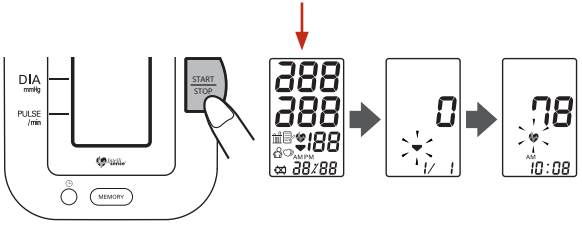


Taking your blood pressure



Blood pressure changes during the day, so it is best to take your readings at the same time every day.

- Support your arm at the level of your heart on a table or high armrest.
- Stay in a seated position.
- Avoid talking when taking a measurement.
- **Take three readings, each two minutes apart.**
- Press the START/STOP button on the monitor.
  Display symbols will appear on the screen.



- The cuff will inflate on its own and feel tight for a few seconds.
- The cuff will relax and display the reading. Record the reading.
- Press STOP.
- Wait two minutes. Repeat these steps for a total of three readings.

- The monitor will measure your top (*systolic*) and bottom (*diastolic*) blood pressure numbers, and your pulse rate.

120 ← **Systolic**
80 ← **Diastolic**

To get your average reading, add the top numbers and divide by three, then add the bottom numbers and divide by three.

Know your numbers – write them down!

- Write down blood pressure and pulse rate numbers displayed on the screen. Wallet cards and tracking sheets are available for you to use and take with you.

If the reading is very different from what you expected, please see your doctor to confirm the reading.

What the numbers mean

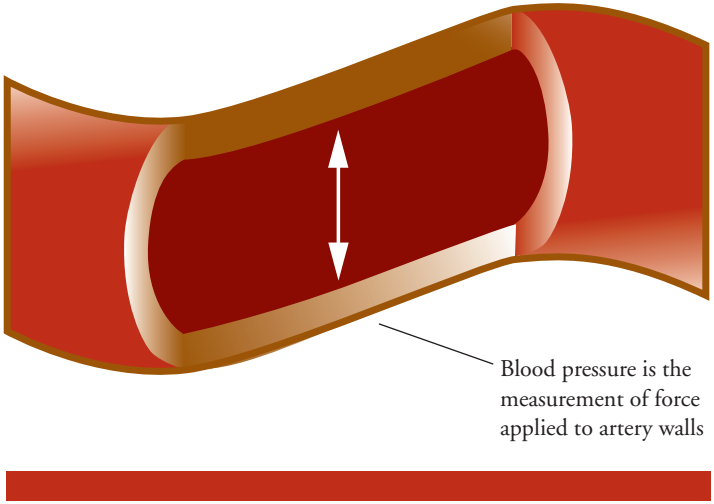
Within Healthy Range: Less than 120 *systolic* Less than 80 *diastolic*	Excellent! This is right where it should be and is a normal blood pressure.*
Approaching High Risk: 120–139 *systolic* 80–89 *diastolic*	This is getting up there. You should recheck it within 2 weeks and begin lifestyle changes that can help keep it from becoming full blown hypertension.*
In High Range: **See a doctor soon** 140–170 *systolic* 90–100 *diastolic*	Your blood pressure is high. You should see a doctor.*
High Reading: **Seek medical care now** 170 or higher *systolic* 100 or higher *diastolic*	Your blood pressure is **very** high. Seek medical care now!*

*Health advice from the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, Washington State Department of Health

Blood pressure and your heart

What is blood pressure?

- It is the force (pressure) of the blood in the main arteries generated by the pumping action of the heart.
- When taking a blood pressure, two pressures are measured, *systolic* and *diastolic*.



Systolic

The pressure in the arteries that occurs when the heart contracts. **It is the top and the larger of the two numbers** reported in a blood pressure reading.

Diastolic

The pressure in the arteries when the heart is relaxed and filling with blood. **It is the lower of the two numbers** reported in a blood pressure reading.

Blood pressure readings are usually given as two numbers. For example, 110 over 70 (written as 110/70).

It's important to control your blood pressure

High blood pressure – hypertension – is a leading cause of heart attack, stroke, heart failure, and kidney failure. Many people have high blood pressure and do not know it. It is often called the "silent killer" because there are rarely symptoms. More than 7 million people in the United States die each year because of high blood pressure.

Control your blood pressure by making lifestyle changes

You can make simple changes to control your blood pressure and be heart-healthy and stroke-free.

- **Quit smoking.**
  - Check out www.quitline.com.
  - Talk to your doctor about medications that may help you quit.
- **Control your weight.**
  - If you are overweight, even a small weight loss can lower your blood pressure.
- **Move more – exercise.**
  - 30 minutes of moderate activity, such as walking, 5 days a week can lower your blood pressure.

- **Eat a diet low in salt.**
  - Read food labels.
  - Select foods with no more than 400 mg of sodium (salt) per serving, or foods with no more than 10 percent of daily value of sodium per serving.
  - Avoid foods that have salt listed as one of the first 10 ingredients.
  - Watch out for hidden salt found in compounds used in making foods. Many processed foods are high in sodium (salt).
  - Eat no more than 2000 mg (that's about 1 teaspoon of table salt) of sodium per day. Most Americans eat more than twice this much each day.
- **Limit alcohol to two drinks per day.**
- **Control your diabetes.**
- **Control your cholesterol.**

To learn more:

Quitline.com: 1-800-QUIT-NOW

American Heart Association: www.HeartHub.org

For more information

Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program
Washington State Department of Health
PO Box 47855
Olympia, WA 98504-7855

www.doh.wa.gov

To order a printed copy of this manual:

call 360-236-3695

The manual can also be printed online:

http://here.doh.wa.gov

For persons with disabilities this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TTY/TDD 1-800-833-6388).

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following organizations for contributing to this manual:

- American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
- Omron Healthcare, Inc.
- Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, Washington State Department of Health

Health advice in this manual is given by the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, Washington State Department of Health.

Special thanks to Omron Healthcare, Inc. for use of their illustrations in this manual and for technical advice for presenting instructions.

Healthy Communities Washington

Healthy people in healthy places

Washington State Department of Health

DOH 345-268 March 2010

Washington State Department of Health

Dear Colleague,

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) provides print-ready files (PDFs) of health education materials. To ensure that the original quality of the piece is maintained, please read and follow the instructions below and the specifications included for professional printing.

- **Use the latest version**. DOH materials are developed using the most current information available, are checked for clinical accuracy, and are field tested with the intended audience to ensure they are clear and readable. DOH programs make periodic revisions to educational materials, so please check this web site to be sure you have the latest version. DOH assumes no responsibility for the use of this material or for any errors or omissions.

- **Do not alter**. We are providing this artwork with the understanding that it will be printed without alterations and copies will be free to the public. Do not edit the text or use illustrations or photographs for other purposes without first contacting us. Please do not alter or remove the DOH logo, publication number or revision date. If you want to use a part of this publication for other purposes, contact the Office of Health Promotion first.

- **For quality reproduction**: Low resolution PDF files are intended for black and white or color desktop printers. They work best if you are making only one or two copies. High resolution PDF files are intended for reproducing large quantities and are set up for use by professional offset print shops. The high resolution files also include detailed printing specifications. Please match them as closely as possible and insist on the best possible quality for all reproductions.

If you have questions, contact:
Office of Health Promotion
P.O. Box 47833 Olympia, WA 98504-7833
(360) 236-3736

Sincerely,
Health Education Resource Exchange Web Team