



The #below120/80 Challenge

Week One: Know Your Numbers



Challenge Activities:

- Take your blood pressure twice a day (morning and late afternoon) around the same time every day and log your numbers
- De-stress for at least five minutes per day by practicing mindfulness meditation

Tell your Primary Care Physician (PCP) you are joining the challenge and share your blood pressure log with your medical team.

Blood Pressure Monitoring

The latest blood pressure guidelines from the [American Heart Association \(AHA\)](#) and American College of Cardiology (ACC)) state that having blood pressure of 130/80 or higher is considered high. This guideline change re-categorized 103 million Americans as having high blood pressure, which includes roughly one of every two Americans. It is a good goal to have blood pressure below 120/80.

Use this chart to review your blood pressure readings and to ensure your blood pressure is at healthy levels:

Blood Pressure Categories



BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

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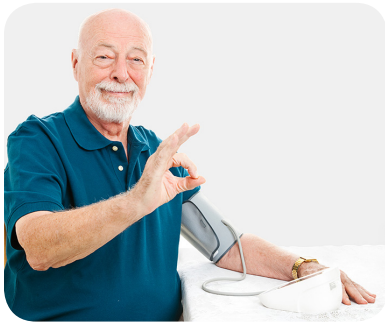
Selecting a Blood Pressure Monitor

A variety of home blood pressure monitors are available at local drugstores or online which typically range in price from \$40 to \$100. Contact Blue Cross customer service to see if a blood pressure monitor will be covered under your plan.

- The American Heart Association recommends using a home blood pressure monitor that measures blood pressure in your upper arm. Wrist or finger blood pressure monitors are less accurate.
- Make sure the cuff fits your arm properly to ensure an accurate reading.
- Pick an automated monitor that inflates the cuff itself.
- Look for a digital readout that is large and bright enough for you to see clearly and also displays your pulse rate.
- Consider an option that sends readings to your smartphone, has graph analysis and can be emailed to your PCP.

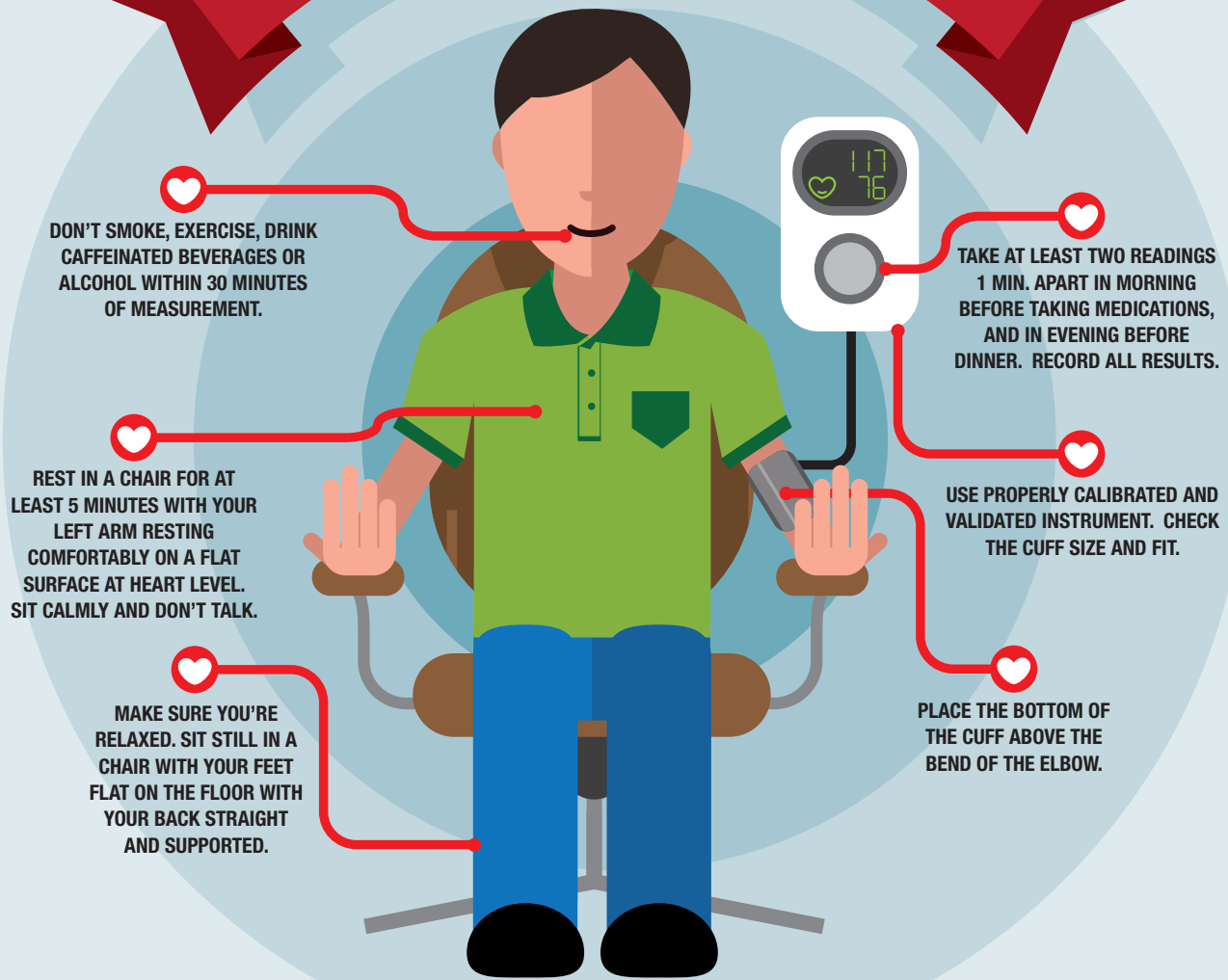


Taking Your Blood Pressure at Home



1. Wrap the cuff around your bare arm and sit with both feet on the ground for about five minutes.
2. Follow the directions on your monitor and record the systolic pressure (the upper number) and diastolic pressure (the lower number).
3. Normal systolic blood pressure is less than 120 and normal diastolic pressure is less than 80. If your reading is high, relax for two to three minutes and then take your blood pressure again.

BLOOD PRESSURE MEASUREMENT INSTRUCTIONS



DON'T SMOKE, EXERCISE, DRINK CAFFEINATED BEVERAGES OR ALCOHOL WITHIN 30 MINUTES OF MEASUREMENT.

REST IN A CHAIR FOR AT LEAST 5 MINUTES WITH YOUR LEFT ARM RESTING COMFORTABLY ON A FLAT SURFACE AT HEART LEVEL. SIT CALMLY AND DON'T TALK.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE RELAXED. SIT STILL IN A CHAIR WITH YOUR FEET FLAT ON THE FLOOR WITH YOUR BACK STRAIGHT AND SUPPORTED.

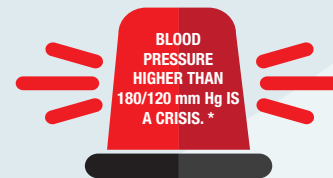
TAKE AT LEAST TWO READINGS 1 MIN. APART IN MORNING BEFORE TAKING MEDICATIONS, AND IN EVENING BEFORE DINNER. RECORD ALL RESULTS.

USE PROPERLY CALIBRATED AND VALIDATED INSTRUMENT. CHECK THE CUFF SIZE AND FIT.

PLACE THE BOTTOM OF THE CUFF ABOVE THE BEND OF THE ELBOW.

American Heart Association recommended blood pressure levels

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120-129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130-139	or	80-89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120



* Wait a few minutes and take blood pressure again. If it's still high, contact your doctor immediately.

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Practice Mindfulness to De-Stress

Take at least one five-minute break for mindful exercise or quiet time every day.

Mindful Observation

The power of observation is stronger than you think. It allows you to see through a new lens, giving your mind a fresh perspective (and a much-needed break) as you carefully inspect and explore every detail of your surroundings. Take five minutes to put your mind at ease with mindful observation:

Step 1: Find your focal point.

Choose a natural object from your immediate environment. This could be a photograph on your desk, a book, or even a spot on the wall.



Step 2: Keep your gaze.

Try not to notice anything except the object you selected and let your eyes settle and feel relaxed.

Step 3: View the object as if you are seeing it for the first time.

Visually explore every detail and allow yourself to be consumed by its presence.



Mindful Listening

Don't think, just hear. The idea of this exercise is to listen intently and become thoroughly engrossed in the music, without preconception or judgment of the genre, artist, lyrics or instrumentation. The goal is to listen from a neutral standpoint and be present in your observations:

Step 1: Select a piece of music you have never heard before.

Find something in your own collection that you have never listened to or look for something new.

Step 2: Close your eyes and listen intently.

Try not to get drawn into judging the music by its genre, title or artist name before it has begun. Do your best to ignore any labels and allow yourself to get lost in the various sounds for the duration of the song.

Step 3: Focus on each and every sound.

Even if the music isn't to your liking at first, let go of your dislike and be aware of every piece of audio that travels to your ear. Listen to the dynamics of each instrument, separate each sound in your mind and analyze each one by one.

Step 4: Hone in on the vocals.

Continue to let the sound waves guide your mind to relaxation. Move your focus to the sound of the voice and its range and tones.



Sources: Pocketmindfulness.com, WebMD publications