

## **Checking Your Blood Pressure at Home**

Checking your blood pressure regularly at home, and keeping a record, can be very useful. The record helps your health care provider know whether you actually have high blood pressure and, if so, how well your blood pressure is controlled. Home monitoring also helps you see the benefits of treatments and lifestyle changes, and reminds you to stick to your treatment plan.

### **Buying a Blood Pressure Device**

Blood pressure devices can be purchased in most pharmacies. Be sure to buy a device that has this logo:



It is very important to buy a device with the right size of cuff for your arm — measure the circumference (midpoint between shoulder and elbow) of your bare upper arm. Then match your measurement with measurements provided on the monitor's package or instruction manual. Ask for help if you need it.

Home blood pressure monitors are either semi-automatic or automatic. A basic model costs approximately \$100. Automatic monitors are easier to use, but tend to be more expensive. Once you have purchased a home monitor, take it to your healthcare provider's office once or twice a year to make sure it continues to give accurate readings. Also re-check the instructions for measuring blood pressure to make sure you're still measuring your blood pressure properly.

### **Home Blood Pressure Monitoring: How To Do It Right**

- If necessary, empty your bladder or bowel beforehand.
- Rest quietly for five minutes before taking a measurement. Don't take your blood pressure if you are uncomfortable, cold, anxious, stressed or in pain.
- Sit with your feet flat on the floor (do not cross your legs) with your back supported and arm resting on a table or firm surface at heart level.
- Wrap the cuff snugly on your bare upper arm (two fingers should fit between the blood pressure cuff and your arm). The edge of the cuff must be 1 or 2 cm above your elbow.
- Measure your blood pressure in the morning and evening for seven days before your next appointment, or after a change in blood pressure medication. Take at least two readings each time. Keep the readings in a log. Use the same arm each time you take a reading.
- DO NOT smoke or drink caffeine (coffee, tea, cola and some sports drinks) for 30 minutes beforehand.
- DO NOT speak, talk or watch TV during monitoring.
- Take your blood pressure before taking your medications.

At [www.hypertension.ca](http://www.hypertension.ca) you can find:

- A list of approved blood pressure devices (available under “device endorsements”)
- A video on how to measure blood pressure at home

#### **Sources:**

**1)** Getting your blood pressure in check. Heart and Stroke Foundation. 2012. [http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.iqQLcMWJtE/b.3484023/k.2174/Heart\\_disease\\_\\_High\\_blood\\_pressure.htm](http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.iqQLcMWJtE/b.3484023/k.2174/Heart_disease__High_blood_pressure.htm)

**2)** Measuring BP at home. Hypertension Canada. 2012. [http://www.hypertension.ca/images/stories/dls/2011\\_Resources\\_En/2011\\_MeasureBPatHomeEN.pdf](http://www.hypertension.ca/images/stories/dls/2011_Resources_En/2011_MeasureBPatHomeEN.pdf)

(Websites accessed January 2013)



## What You can Do About High Blood Pressure

Making changes to your lifestyle is an effective way to better control your blood pressure.

<b>If you:</b>	<b>You can reduce your BP by:</b>
Eat a healthy diet with less salt (< 1 teaspoon a day). See below.	- 5.1/-2.7
Lose weight	- 1.1/-0.9 per kg lost
Drink alcohol in moderation: one or two drinks a day, maximum of nine for women and 14 for men per week	-3.9/-2.4 (if < 3.6 drinks per day)
Be active: 30 to 60 minutes, 5 to 7 days a week. Try walking, biking, swimming, cross country skiing or any other physical activity that you enjoy. Even a little bit of physical activity is better than no activity.	-4.9/-3.7
Eat according to the DASH diet (high in calcium, potassium, magnesium and fibre, and low in saturated and trans fats). For more information, see online link in Resources.	-11.4/-5.5

### To eat a healthy, low salt (sodium) diet:

Choose the following more often:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables, low fat milk products, whole grains, lean meat, fish and poultry.
- Use herbs and spices to flavour food – try not to use salt when cooking and remove the salt shaker from the table.
- Read food labels – buy brands with 5% or less Daily Value (< 125 mg) of salt per serving

Avoid the following:

- Fast food, restaurant and packaged food
- Food high in sugar, or saturated or trans fat or with a 5% or more Daily Value (> 125 mg) of salt per serving
- Condiments such as ketchup, mustard, soy sauce, gravies and salad dressing high in salt
- Cured/smoked meats or fish

### Other vital steps to take:

- If you smoke, take steps to quit and avoid second-hand smoke. Stopping smoking lowers your chance of dying early.
- Reduce stress. Taking steps to reduce your stress can help improve your general health, including your blood pressure.

### Resources

<http://www.hypertension.ca> (click on Education, then Public)

<http://www.heartandstroke.com>

[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new\\_dash.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf) (provides detailed information on the DASH diet)

### Sources:

**1)** Hypertension Canada. Understanding and Managing Your Blood Pressure. 2012 <http://www.hypertension.ca/> Accessed August 2012.;

**2)** Padwal R, Campbell N, Touyz RM, and For the Canadian Hypertension Education Program. CHEP Recommendations: Applying the 2005 Canadian Hypertension Education Program recommendations: 3. Lifestyle modifications to prevent and treat hypertension. CMAJ September 27, 2005 173:749-751

