

Checking Your Blood Pressure at Home

If you have diabetes and high blood pressure, you may gain from checking your blood pressure at home. Here are some common questions and answers to review with your doctor.

Why should I check my blood pressure at home?

Checking at home can show you how well you are controlling your blood pressure. It can also help you see how your medicines, eating habits, and exercise affect your blood pressure. Finally, it can help your doctor fine-tune your treatment.

When should I check my blood pressure?

Your doctor can help you set a schedule. You should check at different times of the day and under different conditions. You may need to check more often when you first start, if your medicine is being adjusted, or if you are having problems with low or high blood pressure.

What is my blood pressure goal?

Blood pressure goals can differ from one person to another, so talk to your doctor. A normal blood pressure is less than 120/80. For most people who have diabetes and high blood pressure, the goal is 130/80 or less.

What type of monitor should I use?

There are many different types of monitors, so ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice. Most people like monitors that are digital and automatic. Blood pressure monitors offer lots of feature choices. Some run on batteries, while others can be plugged in. Some measure your heart rate as well as your blood pressure. Some have a memory to store your results. Deciding what features you want and how much you want to spend can help you choose. You may also want to check out ratings in consumer magazines or on the Internet.

Whichever type you choose, be sure the brand you buy has a seal of approval from the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation. This means it has passed a test for accuracy. Be sure you get the right size of cuff based on your monitor's directions and your arm size. Most adults need a large cuff.

How can I tell if my monitor is working right?

Have your monitor checked for accuracy when you first buy it and about once a year after that. Take it to your doctor's office. Compare results from your monitor with results from the doctor's monitor. You should also get it checked if you drop it or have any reason to think it may be giving wrong results.

