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Blood Pressure Measurement

Blood pressure is a measurement of the force on the walls of your arteries as your heart pumps blood through your body.

You can measure your blood pressure at home. You can also have it checked at your health care provider's office or even a fire station.

How the Test is Performed

Sit in a chair with your back supported. Your legs should be uncrossed, and your feet on the floor.

Your arm should be supported so that your upper arm is at heart level. Roll up your sleeve so that your arm is bare. Be sure the sleeve is not bunched up and squeezing your arm. If it is, take your arm out of the sleeve, or remove the shirt entirely.

You or your provider will wrap the blood pressure cuff snugly around your upper arm. The lower edge of the cuff should be 1 inch (2.5 cm) above the bend of your elbow.

- The cuff will be inflated quickly. This is done either by pumping the squeeze bulb or pushing a button on the device. You will feel tightness around your arm.
- Next, the valve of the cuff is opened slightly, allowing the pressure to slowly fall.
- As the pressure falls, the reading when the sound of blood pulsing is first heard is recorded. This is the systolic pressure.
- As the air continues to be let out, the sounds will disappear. The point at which the sound stops is recorded. This is the diastolic pressure.

Inflating the cuff too slowly or not inflating it to a high enough pressure may cause a false reading. If you loosen the valve too much, you will not be able to measure your blood pressure.

The procedure may be done two or more times.