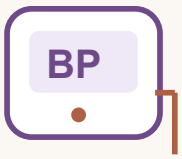
Patient guide

Blood pressure: a clearer plan at home



Understand your numbers. Build a calm routine. Know your next step.

Patient guide

Adult guide for patients in the U.S. and India. Follow your individual care-team instructions. Pregnancy and pediatric care need separate guidance.

1 Your numbers tell a story

Blood pressure is the force of blood against your blood vessels. The top number (systolic) is the pressure when your heart beats. The bottom number (diastolic) is the pressure between beats. Readings use mm Hg.

High blood pressure often has no symptoms. Checking it and following your care plan can help protect your heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes. One reading does not tell the whole story; your care team looks at the pattern.

2 Leave the visit with a clear plan

Ask your care team to write your personal target, when to check, when to call, and your follow-up date on the worksheet. Targets and treatment depend on your health and circumstances.

Choose your first step
What is the one thing you will do next? Write it down with a date.

Know how to share readings
Confirm whether to bring a paper log, call, or use your clinic's secure portal.

A plan that fits you

If you are pregnant or recently gave birth, ask for a specific blood pressure plan. This general adult guide does not cover pregnancy care.

Follow your care-team instructions.

3 Take a reading you can trust

Choose a validated automatic upper-arm monitor with a cuff that fits your arm. Ask your clinician or pharmacist to check the model and cuff size; bring the monitor to a visit.

30 minutes before
Avoid caffeine, smoking, and exercise. Empty your bladder.

Settle for 5 minutes
Rest quietly. Sit with your back supported, feet flat, and legs uncrossed.

Position the cuff
Put it on bare upper-arm skin. Support your arm so the cuff is at heart level. Follow the device instructions.

Measure and repeat
Stay still and do not talk or use your phone. Take two readings, one minute apart, and record both.

4 Keep a simple record

Use the blood pressure log for the date, time, both readings, and notes your team requests. Check at the times agreed with your team. Bring the log and your medicine list to follow-up.

If a reading is higher than usual and you feel well, repeat it and record both. Ask your team about repeated readings outside your personal range. Use the urgent instructions below for very high readings.

No monitor yet?

Tell your clinic. Ask about a loan program, a suitable lower-cost option, or where you can get a reliable reading. Availability and costs vary.

5 Make medicines easier to manage

Take blood pressure medicines as prescribed. Do not stop, double, or change a dose because of a home reading unless your care team has given you a specific plan.

Keep an updated list of medicines, vitamins, and supplements. Ask your pharmacist before starting an over-the-counter medicine, including cold or pain products. Ask what to do if you miss a dose or notice a side effect.

Before you run out

Write your refill contact on the worksheet. Tell the team early if cost, side effects, or getting to the pharmacy makes treatment difficult.

Follow your care-team instructions.

6 Choose a change you can keep

Ask what food choices, activity, sleep, stress support, and tobacco or alcohol changes fit your health. Choose one realistic step rather than trying to change everything at once.

Food that fits your life
Discuss ways to use less salt and include vegetables, fruit, and other foods your team recommends. Ask about kidney disease or other diet restrictions before using salt substitutes.

Movement that fits your body
Ask which activities are safe for you and how to build up gradually.

Support is part of care
Mention food costs, work hours, transportation, language, or worries. Ask whom the clinic can connect you with.

7 A very high reading needs a response

If the top number is higher than 180 OR the bottom number is higher than 120 mm Hg and you have chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, vision changes, or trouble speaking: call your emergency number now: 911 in the U.S., 112 in India, or the local number elsewhere. Do not wait for the pressure to fall.

If either number is above that level and you have no symptoms: wait at least one minute, then check again. If it is still that high, contact a healthcare professional immediately. Do not take extra medicine on your own.

Do not wait for a blood pressure reading

Sudden one-sided weakness, trouble speaking, or sudden vision loss can be stroke signs. Even without a blood pressure reading, call your emergency number now: 911 in the U.S., 112 in India, or the local number elsewhere.

8 Bring the story back to your team

Bring your readings, medicine list, questions, and monitor if requested. Mention dizziness, fainting, side effects, or readings that concern you; ask your team when these require urgent help.

Before leaving, confirm the next appointment, how soon to expect a reply to a message, and whom to contact outside office hours. Ask an interpreter or trusted support person to help if you would like.

Follow your care-team instructions.

Questions to ask

- ☐ What is my target and when should I check?
- ☐ Can you check my cuff, monitor, and technique?
- ☐ Which readings or symptoms mean I should call?
- ☐ What should I do if I miss a medicine dose?
- ☐ How will we review the log, and when is my next visit?

Worksheet

Use the matching blood pressure worksheet to record your personal plan and both readings. Fill in targets and contact instructions with your care team.

The foundation confirmed completion of clinical and language review on October 13, 2026. Source links are included with this guide.

Follow your care-team instructions.

PATIENT TOOLKIT

Sources & further reading

The foundation confirmed completion of clinical and language review on October 13, 2026. Source links are included with this guide.

CDC | About High Blood Pressure
https://www.cdc.gov/high-blood-pressure/about/index.html

American Heart Association | Home Blood Pressure Monitoring
https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/understanding-blood-pressure-readings/monitoring-your-blood-pressure-at-home

American Heart Association | Managing High Blood Pressure Medications
https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/managing-high-blood-pressure-medications

American Heart Association | Managing Blood Pressure with a Heart-Healthy Diet
https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/managing-blood-pressure-with-a-heart-healthy-diet

CDC | Signs and Symptoms of Stroke
https://www.cdc.gov/stroke/signs-symptoms/index.html

American Heart Association | How Potassium Can Help Prevent or Treat High Blood Pressure
https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/how-potassium-can-help-control-high-blood-pressure/

World Health Organization | Hypertension
https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hypertension

American Heart Association | Understanding Blood Pressure Readings
https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/understanding-blood-pressure-readings

CDC | Measuring Your Blood Pressure
https://www.cdc.gov/high-blood-pressure/measure/index.html

American Heart Association | How to Manage High Blood Pressure
https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure

American Heart Association | When To Call 911 About High Blood Pressure
https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/understanding-blood-pressure-readings/when-to-call-911-for-high-blood-pressure

FDA | Create and Keep a Medication List for Your Health
https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/create-and-keep-medication-list-your-health

Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India | Emergency Response Support System (ERSS)
https://www.mha.gov.in/en/commoncontent/emergency-response-support-system-erss

Follow your care-team instructions.