

Quick Tips for Taking an Accurate Blood Pressure

Things to Remember:

- Regardless of manufacturer, automated blood pressure monitor should be powered off between patients to clear patient data and ensure patient comfort.
- Regardless of cuff manufacturer, clinician should compress blood pressure cuff after each use to eliminate residual air.
- Patient should be seated quietly, both feet flat on floor, back supported.
- Patient should rest for 2-3 minutes prior to taking a blood pressure reading.
- Patient & Clinician should not speak during the reading.
- Clinician should support patient's arm, keeping cuff at heart height and impeding movement during the reading.
- Cuff should be positioned 1" above the elbow.
- Cuff should be wrapped around upper arm tightly enough for the 2-finger-test.
- Cuff and artery should be properly aligned.
- Cuff should not be placed over clothing.
- Cuff should be the proper size for the patient.
 - A cuff that is too small will cause a high reading.
 - A cuff that is too large will cause a low reading.

References:

1. Accurate blood pressure measurement: Why does it matter? Norman R.C. Campbell, MD; Donald W. McKay, PhD, CMAJ 1999;161:277-8.
2. Recommendations for Blood Pressure Measurement in Humans and Experimental Animals, AHA Scientific Statement, Thomas G. Pickering, MD, Dphil, et.al., Published online before print Dec 20, 2004, doi:10.1161/01.HYP.0000150859.47929.8e.
3. Recommendations for Human Blood Pressure Determination by Sphygmomanometers, Report of a Special Task Force Appointed by the Steering Committee, American Heart Association, Edward D. Frohlich, MD, Chairman, et.al., Reprinted in Circulation 1988; 77:501A-514A and Hypertension 1988; 11:209A-222A.
4. The Importance of Large Blood Pressure Cuffs, by Kmom, Updated April 2003.