

# How To Take Your Blood Pressure

Knowing your blood pressure before, during and after pregnancy is very important. Taking it in between office visits can help you and your health care provider better understand your blood pressure and can guide treatment.

Use your own blood pressure monitor or check your local pharmacy. To find a pharmacy near you that offers free blood pressure checks, visit [nyc.gov/health/map](https://nyc.gov/health/map). If you need help, ask pharmacy staff.

## 1. Before taking your blood pressure

- Do not smoke, drink alcohol or caffeine, or take a decongestant.
- Do not exercise for at least 30 minutes.
- Use the bathroom. A full bladder can increase your blood pressure reading.
- Sit in a chair with your back supported, your feet flat on the ground and your legs uncrossed.
- Sit quietly for five minutes, without any distractions.
- Wear short sleeves or a tank top so the cuff can be placed on bare skin. Rolling up long sleeves or putting the cuff on over clothing can give you a higher blood pressure reading.

## 2. How to put on the cuff

- Put your left arm through the cuff loop. Slide the cuff up your arm so the bottom edge is about 1 inch above your elbow.
- The tube should run along the inside of your arm and be in line with your little (pinky) finger.
- Tighten the cuff and secure the strap.
- Rest your arm with your elbow slightly bent on a table, with the cuff at heart level and your palm up.



## 3. Take your blood pressure twice

It is important to remain quiet and to not use electronic devices or watch television while measuring your blood pressure.

- Press "START."
- The cuff will automatically inflate and tighten around your arm. After a few seconds, it will begin to deflate and you will see your blood pressure numbers on the monitor.
- The top number is your systolic (**SYS**) pressure and the bottom is your diastolic (**DIA**) pressure.
- Write the numbers in your Blood Pressure Tracking Card with the date and time.
- Wait one minute, then take your blood pressure again **on the same arm**. Write the numbers in your Blood Pressure Tracking Card with the date and time.

Blood pressure is the force of blood moving through your blood vessels. The higher it is, the more pressure it puts on the inside of your blood vessels. This extra pressure can also damage your organs.

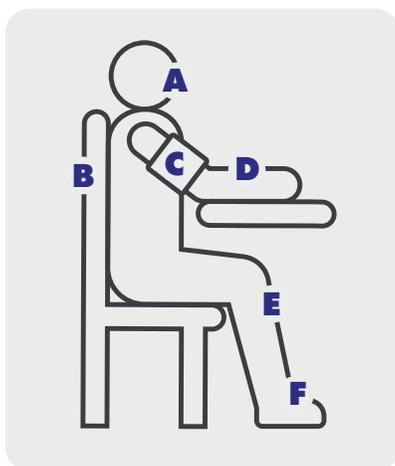
**Blood pressure is measured with two numbers. It is written with one number over the other.**

<b>120</b>	<b>Systolic</b> The amount of pressure in your arteries when your heart pumps blood
<b>80</b>	<b>Diastolic</b> The amount of pressure in your arteries when your heart rests between heartbeats

Speak with your provider to find out what your blood pressure number should be. A provider can help you set a goal and work with you to achieve it.

If your systolic (top number) is 180 or higher (160 if pregnant) OR if your diastolic (bottom number) is 110 or higher (also 110 if pregnant), your blood pressure is dangerously high. **Call your provider or visit a medical facility now — even if you feel fine.**

**Share your blood pressure number with your provider at your next visit.**



**Always sit in the right position to get the correct blood pressure reading every time.\***

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| <b>A</b> Do not have a conversation.              | <b>D</b> Rest your arm at heart level.      |
| <b>B</b> Sit in a chair with your back supported. | <b>E</b> Keep your legs uncrossed.          |
| <b>C</b> Put the cuff on your bare arm.           | <b>F</b> Keep your feet flat on the ground. |

\*Adapted with permission from the American Medical Association and Health Quality Innovators.

Bring your tracking card the next time you visit your provider, and review your numbers together. To learn more, visit [nyc.gov/health](https://nyc.gov/health) and search for **high blood pressure**.