

Understanding *Blood Pressure*

Steps to Follow

BEFORE TAKING YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Do:

- Go to the bathroom.
- Rest for 3 to 4 minutes.
- Sit comfortably:
 - Uncross your legs
 - Uncross your ankles
 - Sit with back supported

Don't Use:

- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Tobacco

FOR AN ACCURATE READING

Do:

- Same time of day
- Always use left arm

Don't Measure Immediately:

- Upon waking up
- After exercising (wait 1 hour)



Blood pressure is the pressure your blood exerts against your blood vessel walls as your heart pumps.

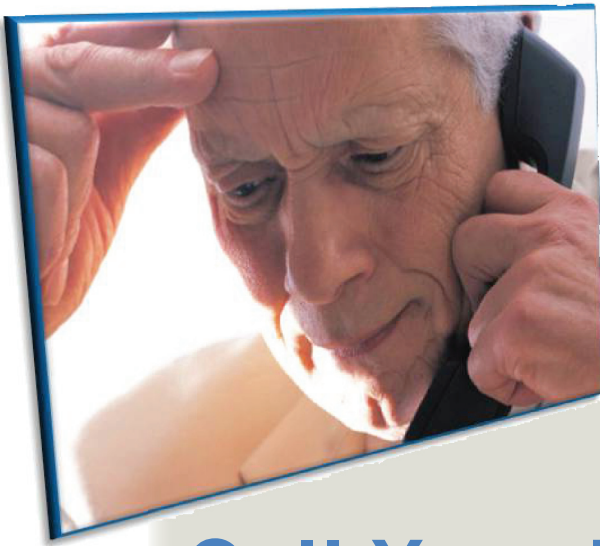


REMEMBER, BLOOD PRESSURE...

Varies throughout the day

Often higher in the morning

Personal goals should be talked about with your doctor



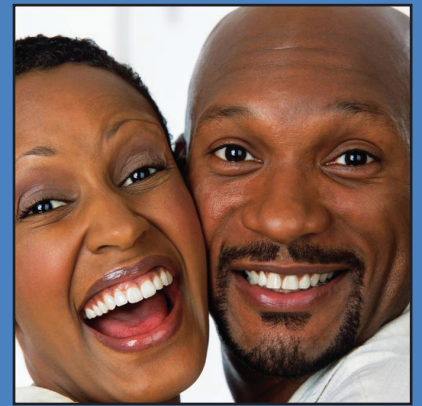
START MONITORING

Blood pressure changes from minute to minute and is affected not only by activity and rest, but also by temperature, diet, emotional state, posture, and medications.

Call Your Doctor

WHEN your blood pressure is higher than normal AND you have:

- A severe headache, OR
- Chest pain, OR
- Numbness, OR
- Tingling in your face or limbs.



The higher, or **top number** in your blood pressure reading is your **systolic** pressure and is the pressure at the peak of each heart beat. The lower, or **bottom number** is the **diastolic** reading. It is the pressure when the heart is resting between beats.

Normal Blood Pressure

- Systolic would be less than 120
- Diastolic would be less than 80

Pre-hypertension

- Systolic would be between 120-139
- Diastolic would be between 80-89

High Blood Pressure – Stage 1

- Systolic would be between 140-159
- Diastolic would be between 90–99

High Blood Pressure – Stage 2

- Systolic would be 160 or higher
- Diastolic would be 100 or higher

HOW OFTEN?

A FEW DAYS A MONTH if your blood pressure is well controlled.

MORE OFTEN if you just started home monitoring, have had medication changes, or have health problems.

Written by Courtney J. Schoessow, MPH, Extension Program Specialist–Health, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M System, February 2008.

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