



A GUIDE TO

Taking Your Blood Pressure Reading

Blood pressure and stroke

High Blood Pressure is a leading risk factor for stroke. Over half of all strokes are linked to high blood pressure. High blood pressure puts additional stress on the blood vessels throughout your body, especially the ones in your brain. This can damage blood vessels, which can lead to stroke.

A healthy diet, regular exercise, not smoking and keeping a healthy weight can help prevent or reduce high blood pressure.

What is blood pressure?

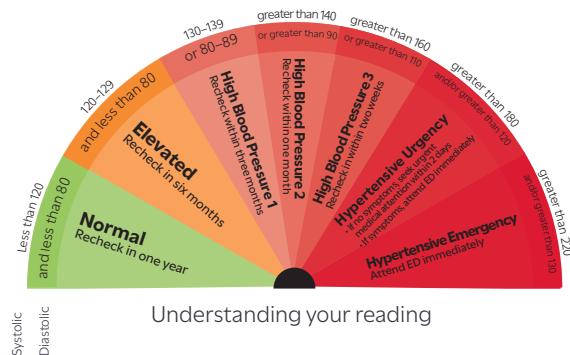
Blood pressure is a measurement of the force of blood on the blood vessel walls as it travels through your body. As the blood moves, it pushes against the side of the blood vessels. The strength of this pushing is your blood pressure.

Your blood pressure is expressed as two numbers, e.g. 120/80. Said as "120 over 80".



The top number is your systolic pressure (e.g. 120). This is the pressure on your blood vessel walls as your heart pumps. The lower number is your diastolic pressure (e.g. 80). This is the pressure on your blood vessel walls as your heart rests between pumps.

What does your blood pressure reading mean?



Normal blood pressure is around 120/80 or lower.

High blood pressure is when it is consistently over 140/90. High blood pressure often doesn't have any symptoms. The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get it checked. If you do have high blood pressure it is important to follow your doctors' advice. Only a GP can diagnose high blood pressure as multiple readings over multiple days are needed to get an accurate picture. This is because blood pressure fluctuates during the day in response to factors such as exercise, stress, fluid intake etc. Before someone is diagnosed with high blood pressure, their doctor will usually measure their blood pressure over several occasions to make sure that the reading is consistent. You may be asked to monitor your blood pressure at home.

If your blood pressure is in the Hypertensive Urgency category (greater than 180/120) and you experiencing one or more of the following symptoms (chest pain, headache, vision problems, dizziness, short of breath) attend the closest emergency department immediately. If your reading is greater than 180/120 and you do not have symptoms still seek urgent medical attention within 2 days.

If your blood pressure is greater than 220/130 attend emergency department immediately.

How to use an Omron blood pressure monitor

1. Get ready (5-10 minutes before)

1. Avoid these just before measuring:

- Caffeine, smoking, exercise, or a big meal for at least 30 minutes beforehand, as they can raise your reading.

2. Rest quietly:

- Sit calmly for 5 minutes in a chair.

2. Set up your space and body position

1. Sit correctly:

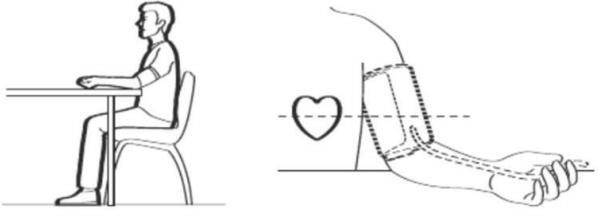
- **Back:** Supported by a chair.
- **Feet:** Flat on the floor, **legs uncrossed**.
- **Arm:** Bare (no clothing under the cuff), resting on a table so the **cuff will be at heart level**.

2. Choose the arm:

- If your doctor has told you a preferred arm, use that.
- If not, many instructions suggest using the **left arm**, unless told otherwise.

3. Remove tight clothing and jewellery:

- Roll up your sleeve so the cuff can go directly on the skin, not over clothes.



3. Put the cuff on correctly

1. Locate the cuff line/artery mark:

- Most Omron cuffs have a line or symbol that should line up with the **inside of your arm**, roughly over the artery.

2. Position the cuff:

- Wrap the cuff around your upper arm.
- The **bottom edge of the cuff** should be about **2-3 cm (about 1 inch)** above the bend of your elbow.

3. Tightness:

- The cuff should be snug but not painful.
- You should be able to slide **one fingertip** under the cuff, but not much more.

4. Cuff tube position:

- The tube from the cuff should run **down the inside of your arm**, toward the monitor.

4. Prepare the monitor

1. Place the monitor:

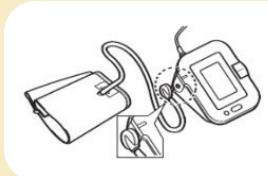
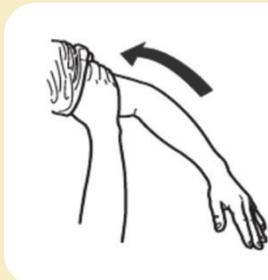
- Put the Omron monitor on a **flat, stable surface** (table or desk) where you can easily see the screen.

2. Connect the cuff:

- Plug the tubing from the cuff into the **cuff connector** on the monitor (usually on the side)

3. Power on:

- Insert batteries or plug in the adapter (depending on your model), then press the **ON/START** button once. Most models will run a quick self check.



5. Take the reading

1. Final body check:

- Sit still, don't talk, don't move your arm.
- Keep your palm facing up, arm relaxed.

2. Start the measurement:

- Press the **START/STOP** (or just **START**) button.
- The cuff will **inflate automatically**, squeezing your arm firmly, then slowly deflate. This is normal.

3. During measurement:

- Breathe normally.
- Do not move, talk, or tense your arm; movement can cause an error or inaccurate reading.

4. Wait for results:

- When it finishes, the cuff fully deflates and the screen shows:

SYS (systolic) – top number
DIA (diastolic) – bottom number
PULSE – heart rate



6. Read and record the results

1. Note the three key numbers:

- Systolic (SYS): Pressure when the heart beats (top number).
- Diastolic (DIA): Pressure when the heart relaxes (bottom number).
- Pulse: Your heart rate in beats per minute.

2. Write it down:

- Record: **date, time, SYS, DIA, pulse**, and which arm you used.
- Many Omron monitors store readings automatically; you can also sync some models with an app.

3. If the reading looks unusual:

- Wait **1-2 minutes** sitting quietly, then repeat.
- Do **2-3 readings**, and your doctor may prefer the **average**.

7. Turn off and remove the cuff

1. Turn off:

- Press the **START/STOP** or **OFF** button (some models turn off automatically after a short time).

2. Remove the cuff:

- Gently unwrap the cuff; don't pull it off by the tube.

3. Store properly:

- Keep the monitor and cuff in a safe, dry place.
- Avoid bending the tubing sharply.

8. Extra tips for accurate readings

- **Same time each day:** Try to measure at **roughly the same times** (for example, morning and evening) as your clinician advises.
- **Multiple days:** A single reading is less useful than a pattern over **several days**.
- **Irregular heartbeat symbol:** Many Omron monitors can show a symbol if they detect irregular heartbeats; if this appears often, tell your doctor.
- **Follow your specific manual:** Different Omron models (e.g., HEM 7156T, HEM 7121, etc.) have slightly different buttons and features, so check the manual for model specific instructions and safety notes.

About Stroke Aotearoa New Zealand

Stroke Aotearoa New Zealand is the national charity dedicated to stroke prevention and improving outcomes for stroke survivors and their whānau. The generosity of individuals allows us to provide every aspect of our life-changing services.

If you want to find out more about donating or fundraising to help protect the lives of people living in your community, please call **0800 45 99 54** or email **fundraising@stroke.org.nz**.

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