

# How to Take a Blood Pressure

Proper technique is essential in accurate blood pressure measurement. Use the following to insure you get the best measurement possible and learn how each factor can affect your blood pressure reading.

## **Sit Quietly for 5 Minutes**

Sitting quietly for a short period of time can aide in bringing your blood pressure to its more consistent state.

## **Do Not Drink Caffeine, Alcohol, or Smoke 30 Minutes Prior to Taking Your Blood Pressure**

These items are vasoconstrictive. This means they may increase your blood pressure.

## **Sit Up Straight With Both Feet Flat on the Floor**

Crossing legs can increase blood pressure. Slouching may elevate both systolic and diastolic levels.

## **Do Not Take Blood Pressure Over Clothing. Using The proper cuff size, wrap cuff snugly around upper right arm area, one inch above natural crease.**

The bladder of a loosely wrapped cuff will balloon and decrease the effective width causing an elevated reading. Taking blood pressure over clothing may also give you a falsely high reading. Be sure to use your right arm every time you take a blood pressure unless otherwise indicated.

## **Make certain upper right arm is at heart level with elbow slightly flexed, palm facing upwards on a flat surface with arm supported**

If the arm is lower or higher than heart level, blood pressure could fluctuate as much as 10 mmHg.

## **Inflate cuff**

Sources: American Heart Association and the Joint National Committee's Seventh Report on High Blood Pressure



**HEART DISEASE &  
STROKE PREVENTION PROGRAM**  
UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH