

The way you check a Blood Pressure can affect its reading

Did you know?

Some common practices used when taking a blood pressure can raise BP readings artificially, for example:

- Putting a blood pressure cuff over clothing, instead of a bare arm, can add between 5-50 mmHg to systolic BP.
- Having a conversation can add up to 10mmHg to systolic BP.
- Not supporting the arm at heart level can add up to 7 mmHg to systolic BP.
- Sitting with the back unsupported can add 6-10 mmHg to systolic BP.

What can you do to help your staff take an accurate blood pressure?

Review these simple guidelines with your staff:

1. Encourage the patient to sit:
 - with their back and feet supported
 - with their legs uncrossed
 - with their arm supported at the level of their heart
2. Wait at least 5 minutes after arrival in the office to measure blood pressure.
3. Apply the blood pressure cuff over bare arm.
4. Stop all conversation during blood pressure measurement.
5. Take a minimum of two blood pressures.

Sources:

Joel Handler, The Importance of Accurate Blood Pressure Measurement. Perm J. 2009 Summer; 13(3): 51–54.

Pickering, et al., Recommendations for Blood Pressure Measurement in Humans & Experimental Animals: Part 1: Blood Pressure Measurement in Humans: A Statement for Professionals from the Sub-committee of Professional & Public Education of the American Heart Association Council on High Blood Pressure Research. Circulation 2005; 11(5): 697-716.