

— FREE QUICK-START • HEART HEALTH

The 7 Golden *Rules of Home* Blood Pressure

The American Heart Association measurement method as seven rules you can tick off, a cuff finder for your arm, and a 7-day worksheet that works out your average.



7

MEASUREMENT RULES

1

CUFF FINDER

7

DAYS LOGGED

5

CATEGORIES

HEART HEALTH • FREE QUICK-START

The 7 Golden Rules of Home Blood Pressure

Home readings are only as good as the technique behind them. This guide turns the American Heart Association measurement method into seven rules you can tick off, finds the right cuff for your arm, and gives you a 7-day worksheet that works out the average your doctor will want to see.

7 RULES The checklist that removes the biggest measurement errors	10+ MMHG What a full bladder, talking or an unsupported arm can each add	2 × 2 READINGS A DAY Two in the morning and two in the evening, one minute apart	7 DAYS Leave out day 1 and average the rest
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How to use this guide

10 MINUTES

STEP 1 Measure your arm Halfway between shoulder and elbow. The cuff finder tells you which cuff size fits.	STEP 2 Tick the seven rules Before your first session, run through the checklist until it is automatic.	STEP 3 Log 7 days Two readings each morning and evening. The worksheet averages days 2–7 for you.
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WHEN NOT TO WAIT FOR AN AVERAGE

A reading of 180/120 or more that stays there after five minutes of quiet rest needs medical attention today. Call emergency services straight away if it comes with chest pain, shortness of breath, weakness or numbness, difficulty speaking, vision change or confusion. A 7-day home average at or above 130/80 (135/85 in European and UK guidance) is worth booking a routine review.

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The Seven Golden Rules

TICK EACH ONE

Blood pressure rises with a full bladder, crossed legs, an unsupported arm, talking, and the stress of the clinic itself. A single clinic reading can put people in the wrong category; a week of home readings taken the same careful way gives a far more reliable picture.

Many alarming readings are technique errors. A full bladder adds 10–15 mmHg; talking adds about 10; an unsupported arm or back and crossed legs add several more. Fix the technique and some worrying numbers settle back to normal, while genuinely high readings become easier to trust.

Cuff size is the silent error. The cuff bladder should wrap about 80% of your upper arm. In a 2023 study a standard cuff on a large arm read about 5 mmHg too high, and on an extra-large arm almost 20 mmHg too high. Measure your arm before you trust any number.

DONE	RULE	HOW	ERROR IF BROKEN (MMHG)
☐	1. Prepare for 30 minutes	No caffeine, food, nicotine, alcohol or exercise. Empty your bladder.	Full bladder +10 to +15
☐	2. Sit properly	Chair with a back, back supported, feet flat, legs uncrossed.	Crossed legs +2 to +8
☐	3. Arm supported at heart level	Forearm resting on a table, cuff level with the middle of your chest.	Unsupported arm +10
☐	4. Bare arm, right cuff	Cuff on skin, lower edge 2–3 cm above the elbow, snug enough for one finger.	Cuff too small +2 to +10
☐	5. Rest, then stay still and silent	Sit quietly for 5 minutes first. No talking, phone or TV during the reading.	Talking +10
☐	6. Two readings, one minute apart	Write both down, including the one you did not like.	One reading reads 3–5 high on average
☐	7. Same times every day	Morning before tablets, coffee and breakfast; evening before bed.	Random times add 5–10 of noise

RULES IN PLACE

THE EVIDENCE BEHIND IT

AHA SCIENTIFIC STATEMENT, HYPERTENSION 2019
Sets out the measurement method and how far each common mistake moves a reading.

ISHIGAMI ET AL., JAMA INTERN MED 2023
A wrong-size cuff shifted readings by about 4 to 20 mmHg depending on arm size.

ACC/AHA GUIDELINE 2017
Defines the categories below and recommends home readings to confirm clinic numbers.

Find the Right Cuff, and Know the Categories

CALCULATES

CUFF FINDER

Measure your upper arm halfway between the tip of the shoulder and the elbow, arm relaxed, and type the number in centimetres.

ARM CIRCUMFERENCE (CM)

CUFF TO USE

CUFF	ARM	NOTES
Small adult	22–26 cm	Slim upper arms; a standard cuff reads low here.
Adult	27–34 cm	The cuff that comes with most home monitors.
Large adult	35–44 cm	A standard cuff reads high; buy the large cuff.
Extra-large / thigh	45–52 cm	Ask a pharmacist for the right size.

THE CATEGORIES (ACC/AHA 2017, AVERAGE OF GOOD READINGS)

CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC	DIASTOLIC	WHAT TO DO
Normal	Under 120	and under 80	Keep the routine; recheck yearly or as advised.
Elevated	120–129	and under 80	Lifestyle first: salt, potassium-rich food, movement, sleep, alcohol.
Stage 1 hypertension	130–139	or 80–89	Confirm with a week of home averages; discuss with your doctor.
Stage 2 hypertension	140 or more	or 90 or more	Book a prompt review; bring the 7-day average.
Severe	180 or more	or 120 or more	Rest 5 minutes and recheck; if still high, same-day medical care (see above).

European (ESH) and UK (NICE) guidance use 135/85 as the home threshold for high blood pressure.

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LONGEVITY

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LONGEVITY

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The 7-Day Worksheet

Two readings each morning (before tablets, coffee and breakfast) and two before bed, one minute apart. Type systolic and diastolic. Day 1 is practice and is left out of the averages, as the guidelines advise.

DAY	AM 1 SYS / DIA	AM 2 SYS / DIA	PM 1 SYS / DIA	PM 2 SYS / DIA	NOTE
Day 1 practice	/	/	/	/	
Day 2	/	/	/	/	
Day 3	/	/	/	/	
Day 4	/	/	/	/	
Day 5	/	/	/	/	
Day 6	/	/	/	/	
Day 7	/	/	/	/	

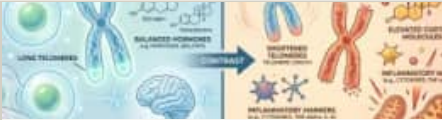
WEEK AVERAGE (DAYS 2-7)

MORNINGS

EVENINGS

The first box is systolic, the second diastolic. Bring the week average, not a single reading, to your doctor.

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From One Week to a Record Your Doctor Can Use

COMPANION E-BOOK

This guide gets the technique right for one week. **The Home Blood Pressure Tracking Kit** carries it through 30 days and does the arithmetic: weekly and monthly averages labelled by category, built-in checks, and a one-page summary for your appointment.

A 30-day log that does the math
two readings morning and evening, with weekly and monthly averages labelled by category.

Built-in checks
the cuff finder, your monitor against the clinic, both arms, and the drop when you stand up.

When to act
an escalation guide (emergency, urgent, prompt, routine) and cut-out wallet cards.

A clinician summary
one page that fills itself in from your log, ready for your appointment.

THIS FREE GUIDE

- ✓ The seven measurement rules and the categories
- ✓ A cuff finder for your arm size
- ✓ A 7-day worksheet with averages

THE TRACKING KIT ADDS

- ✓ A 30-day log with weekly and monthly averages
- ✓ Morning versus evening, both arms and standing checks
- ✓ An escalation guide and wallet cards
- ✓ A one-page summary for your doctor

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SOURCES • FACT-CHECKED BY THE HEALTH SECRETS EDITORIAL TEAM

Muntner P. et al., Measurement of Blood Pressure in Humans, AHA Scientific Statement, Hypertension 2019	The seven rules and the size of each error.
Whelton P.K. et al., 2017 ACC/AHA High Blood Pressure Guideline	Categories and home monitoring.
Ishigami J. et al., JAMA Internal Medicine 2023	Errors from the wrong cuff size.
ESH 2023 guidelines; NICE NG136	The 135/85 home threshold and the 7-day schedule.

AFTER YOUR FIRST WEEK

Your technique is set.

Now keep the record.

01 • SHARE

Take your week average, not a single reading, to your next appointment.

02 • REPEAT

A 7-day block every few months, and after any change in medicine.

03 • GO FURTHER

The Tracking Kit carries the log through 30 days and does the math.

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Educational and organizational tool only, not medical advice. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before changing a blood pressure medicine, and get urgent care for a reading of 180/120 or more with symptoms.