

Steps for Measuring Blood Pressure

The most common place to measure a person's blood pressure is the brachial artery of the upper arm. Measuring blood pressure requires practice until you can operate the equipment smoothly and assess the sounds accurately. Use the following steps to measure a patient's blood pressure:

1. Complete your beginning procedure steps, including washing your hands.
2. Help the patient into a sitting or lying down position so that the forearm is level with the heart and the palm is facing upward. Expose the upper arm by rolling up the sleeve or removing the shirt if the sleeve is tight. For accuracy, the patient should be resting quietly for five minutes before blood pressure is measured.
3. Use alcohol wipes to clean the stethoscope. Rotate the diaphragm until you can hear through it.
4. Locate the patient's brachial artery pulse by straightening his or her arm. Place your fingers across the inside of the antecubital space located at the inner bend of the elbow.
5. Place the arrow mark on the blood pressure cuff over the brachial artery. Wrap the cuff around the patient's upper arm so that the bottom of the cuff is at least one inch above the elbow. The cuff must be even and snug. Place the stethoscope earpieces in your ears.
6. Pump the bulb until the pressure is 30 mmHg higher than the systolic pressure. You can achieve this by using one of the following methods:
 - a. Place the stethoscope over the brachial artery. Inflate the cuff until you hear the pulse stop. Inflate 30 mmHg more.
 - b. Hold the bulb in one hand and palpate the radial artery with the other hand. Inflate the cuff until you no longer feel the radial pulse. Inflate 30 mmHg more.
7. With the stethoscope positioned over the brachial artery, release the valve slightly by turning it counterclockwise. This will allow air to escape from the cuff slowly.
8. Note the reading on the manometer when you hear the first Korotkoff sound. This is the systolic pressure.
9. Continue to deflate the cuff and note the reading when you hear the last Korotkoff sound. This is the diastolic pressure.
10. Deflate the cuff completely and remove it from the patient's arm.
11. Record the patient's name, the time you measured the blood pressure, and the blood pressure reading. Report an abnormal blood pressure immediately.
12. Store the sphygmomanometer. Clean and store the stethoscope.
13. Complete your end-of-procedure steps.

Does it make a difference which arm you use to take a blood pressure reading? A good guide is to determine whether a person's pulse feels stronger in one arm compared to the other. You will have an easier time measuring blood pressure in the arm with the stronger pulse. Don't use an arm that is injured, in a cast, or has an IV. If a woman

has had a mastectomy with lymph node removal, use the arm on the other side of her body. In the case of a double mastectomy, seek a doctor's advice about the best option for measuring blood pressure.

Do not partially deflate the cuff and then reinflate it while taking a blood pressure measurement. This will result in an inaccurate reading. If the cuff is partially deflated, release all the air in the cuff and wait 30 seconds before trying again. Remember that the cuff pressure is uncomfortable for the patient. Be accurate, but also efficient with your blood pressure measurement.

If, while practicing, you take a blood pressure measurement that is very high or extremely low, check again. Remember, you are just learning this skill. Remain calm, but ask the person to have a healthcare professional check his or her blood pressure if the measurement varies from the normal range.