

Tools for Providers

Blood Pressure

Ensuring blood pressure is measured correctly and recorded accurately are important components of quality care.

Tips for Accurate Readings

Use the Correct Cuff Size

Incorrect cuff size is a major source of equipment-related error. Be sure the cuff fits snugly on the arm without straining or slipping.

Don't Round Off

Be sure to record the actual measurement—just a few millimeters may make a difference in the diagnosis.

Important Questions to Ask Yourself

- Has the patient been at rest for at least five minutes?
- Are you pressing too hard with the stethoscope?
- Is the patient sitting in a chair with his or her back supported?
- Has the patient been instructed to relax and not talk during the measurement?
- Is a rolled-up sleeve constricting the patient's arm?
- Is the measurement arm at heart level?
- Is there a shunt or intravenous line in the patient's arm selected for measurement?
- Are both of the patient's legs uncrossed and are his or her feet flat on the floor?

Be Objective

Just because the blood pressure of a given patient is usually in a certain range, don't assume this reading will fall within that range. Use the same technique each time.

Check the Equipment

Routinely inspect your entire blood pressure equipment system to make sure it is functioning properly.

Important Questions to Ask the Patient

- Did the patient smoke or drink alcohol within the last 15 minutes?
- Does the patient have an uncomfortably full bladder?
- Is the patient in pain?