

BLOOD PRESSURE ACCURACY & VARIABILITY QUICK REFERENCE



Accurate Blood Pressure Tips

- Use the proper size cuff; if two cuff sizes fit, use the larger one.
- Place the cuff on a bare arm.
- Place the artery marker over the brachial artery.
- Apply the cuff snugly, allowing room for no more than two fingers underneath.
- Have the patient sit quietly for a few minutes.
- Do not talk to the patient while taking a blood pressure.
- Support the patient's back and feet; keep legs uncrossed.
- Keep the upper arm at heart level with the lower arm passively supported, i.e. resting on lap.
- Keep the arm still during the measurement cycle.

Blood Pressure Variability

The following activities affect a blood pressure reading.

Activity	Systolic (mmHg)
Cuff too small ^{2,4,6,7,8,10,12,14,16,18,19}	10 to 40 ↑
Cuff over clothing ^{10,16,18}	10 to 40 ↑ or ↓
Back/feet unsupported ^{3,18}	5 to 15 ↑
Legs crossed ^{1,5,9,16,17,18}	5 to 8 ↑
Not resting 3 to 5 minutes ^{2,10,16,18,19,20}	10 to 20 ↑
Patient talking ^{2,10,11,16,17,18}	10 to 15 ↑
Labored breathing ^{16,18}	5 to 8 ↑
Full bladder ^{13,16,18}	10 to 15 ↑
Pain ¹⁶	10 to 30 ↑
Arm below heart level ^{2,10,13,16,17,18}	1.8 /inch ↑ 4.6 /cm ↑
Arm above heart level ^{10,13,16,17,18}	1.8 /inch ↓ 4.6 /cm ↓

For references, refer to the footnotes listed on this card.

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