

## TAKING BLOOD PRESSURE IN THE HOME

*Checking blood pressure is an important part of managing high blood pressure (hypertension).*

Because blood pressure monitors are available widely and without a prescription, home monitoring is an easy step that can be taken to improve an individual's condition.

*It is important that caretakers know the right technique for taking blood pressure, and that they understand the readings.*

### UNDERSTAND THE READINGS.

It is important that anyone who takes blood pressure readings understands what the readings mean. It is not sufficient to take the blood pressure and record it.

If the blood pressure is too high or too low it may be a sign of a medical condition that requires immediate attention.

Here's what you need to know if you are taking someone's blood pressure:

- ☞ The **top number is called Systolic BP**- it measure the pressure in the arteries when the heart contracts.
- ☞ The **bottom number is called the Diastolic BP** it measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart rests.
- ☞ Optimal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg (systolic pressure is 120 AND diastolic pressure is less than 80).
- ☞ If a reading is high. Have the person relax for a few minutes and try again.

**IF THE REPEAT BLOOD PRESSURE READING SHOWS A SYSTOLIC (TOP NUMBER) OF 160 OR HIGHER OR DIASTOLIC (BOTTOM NUMBER) OF 100 OR HIGHER, CALL THE INDIVIDUALS PHYSICIAN.**

**IF THE READING IS GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 180/110, CALL 911**

### HOW TO TAKE BLOOD PRESSURE IN THE HOME

To get the most accurate blood pressure readings at home, follow these steps:

- ❧ **NO CAFFEINE OR ALCOHOL.** Make sure the person whose blood pressure you are taking has not consumed any caffeinated or alcoholic beverages, and that they have not smoked, during the 30 minutes before the test.
- ❧ **POSTURE.** Have the person sit quietly for five minutes with their back supported and feet on the floor.
- ❧ **ARM SUPPORT.** When taking the measurement, support the person's arm so the elbow is at the level of the heart.
- ❧ **MAKE SURE THE CUFF FITS.** Measure around your upper arm and choose a monitor that comes with the correct size cuff.
- ❧ **POSITIONING THE CUFF.** Push the person's sleeves out of the way and wrap the cuff over bare skin. Make sure the middle of the cuff is placed directly above the crook of the elbow. Check your monitor's instructions for an illustration or have a healthcare provider show you how.
- ❧ **MEASURE THE BLOOD PRESSURE** according to the machine's instructions. Leave the deflated cuff in place, wait a minute, then take a second reading. If the readings are close, average them. If not, repeat again and average the three readings.
- ❧ **MEASURE AT THE SAME TIME DAILY AND ON THE SAME ARM.** It is important to take the readings at the same time each day, such as morning and evening, or as your healthcare professional recommends. It is also a good idea to take the reading from the same arm each time.
- ❧ **ACCURATELY RECORD ALL YOUR RESULTS.** Record all readings, including the date and time taken.
- ❧ **SHARE THE RESULTS WITH THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER.** Take the record with you each time the individual visits the doctor.

*The most important things to remember are Right Size Cuff,  
Right Cuff Placement, Right Understanding of Results,  
Right Recording and Reporting.*