

PRESSURE POINTS



January 2014

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE NEWS YOU CAN USE

Measuring Blood Pressure at Home: One tool to assist in blood pressure management



Why would my doctor want me to do this at home?

Since high blood pressure doesn't have many symptoms, the only way to know if your blood pressure is above normal is to measure it. Your doctor will measure it during most office visits. Your doctor may also want you to take your own blood pressure readings at home. Home monitoring can provide information on what your blood pressure is during the day when you are doing activities that are normal for you.

Monitoring at home can provide your doctor with information about how your blood pressure changes during the day. This information may allow your physician to make changes to better control your blood pressure.

Who should home monitor?

The American Heart Association recommends home monitoring especially for all people with high blood pressure to help your doctor determine whether treatments are working. Home monitoring is useful for patients who need to be more closely monitored such as patients with coronary heart disease, diabetes or kidney disease. In addition, some patients have what's known as white coat hypertension meaning they get nervous in the doctor's office and their blood pressure shows a higher reading than normal.

Types of home monitors

There are two types of home devices to measure blood pressure: aneroid and digital. Aneroid devices cost \$25 to \$40, are easy to move around but are a bit more complicated to use. Digital devices cost more, ranging from \$40 to \$140 and take your blood pressure automatically. Some of them will also keep records of your readings over time. Discuss the choices with your doctor or nurse so you can pick the monitor that's best for your situation. Also, contact your health insurance company before you buy one to see if some or all of the cost is covered.

Tips for taking your blood pressure

No matter what type of home monitor you choose, proper use requires some practice and training. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute offers tips when measuring your blood pressure:

- Don't drink coffee, smoke or exercise 30 minutes before having your pressure measured.
- Sit quietly for 5 minutes before taking your blood pressure. Sit in a comfortable position with your back supported and your feet flat on the ground.
- Take two blood pressure readings at least a few minutes apart, and average the two results.
- Make sure your arm is positioned properly so that your elbow is at the level of your heart. You may need to place a pillow or cushion under your arm to elevate it.
- Place the cuff on bare skin but don't roll up your sleeve if that causes the sleeve to tighten around your arm.
- Don't talk while taking your blood pressure.

Long-term benefits

Home monitoring is a great way to take control of high blood pressure. Monitoring blood pressure at home doesn't have to be complicated or inconvenient. Tracking blood pressure at home will help you better self-manage your condition and will serve as a reminder to always take your medications appropriately. In the long run, home monitoring of your blood pressure may lead to fewer complications and allow you to enjoy a healthier life.

Questions for Your Health Care Team

- Should I be monitoring my blood pressure at home?
- If my home blood pressure reading is above normal, should I call my doctor's office immediately or just let them know at my next visit?

Exercising on the Web



Is your exercise routine in need of a boost? There's an endless supply of exercise videos free of charge on the Internet. Many are short video clips demonstrating the proper way to perform a variety of exercises ranging from aerobics to Zumba. Whether you're a new mom looking for a quick way to work in exercise or a senior citizen in need of moderate exercise, it's all just a click away.

Here are a few videos to rev up your workout:

- Spark People: www.sparkpeople.com/resource/fitness_videos.asp
- Stronger Seniors: www.strongerseniors.com
- YouTube exercise videos: www.youtube.com/results?search_query=exercise+videos&aq=f

Also, look up exercise apps on your Smartphone. Many of them are free!

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Recipe for Heart Health: *Garlic Shrimp Pasta*

Courtesy of livebetteramerica.com

Serves 6

8 ounces uncooked multigrain angel hair (capellini) pasta or spaghetti

4 cups fresh baby spinach leaves

1 1/2 cups halved cherry tomatoes

3 teaspoons olive oil

1 medium onion, finely chopped (1/2 cup)

1 1/2 pounds fresh medium shrimp, peeled, deveined and tail shells removed

3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

1/2 cup dry white wine or Progresso® reduced-sodium chicken broth (from 32-oz carton)

1/4 cup Progresso® reduced-sodium chicken broth (from 32-oz carton)

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

2 tablespoons butter



In 5-quart saucepan or Dutch oven, cook pasta as directed on package. Drain; return to saucepan. Stir in spinach, tomatoes and 2 teaspoons of the oil. Cover to keep warm.

While pasta is cooking, in 12-inch nonstick skillet, heat remaining 1 teaspoon oil over medium-high heat. Add onion; cook and stir 1 minute. Add shrimp, garlic and pepper flakes; cook and stir 2 minutes.

Stir in wine, broth, salt and pepper; cook 2 minutes or until shrimp are pink and firm. Remove from heat; stir in parsley and butter until butter is melted. Add shrimp mixture to pasta mixture in saucepan; toss to mix.

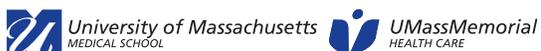
Nutritional information (per serving): Calories: 320; Total Fat: 8g; Saturated Fat: 3.5g; Protein: 26g; Carbohydrates: 34g; Fiber: 4g; Sodium: 960mg



28 Ways to Celebrate Heart Month!

Heart disease may be a leading cause of death, but that doesn't mean you have to accept it as your fate. Although you lack the power to change some risk factors – such as family history, sex or age – there are some key heart disease prevention steps you can take. You can avoid heart problems in the future by adopting a healthy lifestyle today. Visit umassmemorial.org/heartsmart to view our interactive heart health calendar with 28 tips to get you started.

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