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Buy a monitor that meets the test

There are dozens of home blood pressure monitors on the market. You can buy a good one at your local pharmacy or a big-box store for anywhere between \$40 and \$100.

The American Heart Association recommends using the type with a cuff that fits around your upper arm. Those that go around the wrist or attach to a finger aren't quite as accurate. Not all home blood pressure monitors pass tests for accuracy and reliability. Independent evaluations have been done by the dabl® Educational Trust, the British Hypertension Society, and the Consumers Union® (which publishes *Consumer Reports*). Each has posted or published its list of trustworthy machines.

Do it right!

- In addition to using a home blood pressure monitor the right way, here are other tips to help you get the most accurate measurements of your blood pressure:
- If you smoke or drink coffee, wait at least 30 minutes after having a cigarette or cup of coffee before taking your blood pressure.
- Sit quietly for a few minutes before beginning.
- After taking your blood pressure, relax for a minute and then do it again.
- At first, take your blood pressure twice a day for a week. The best times of day are early in the morning, before you have taken your blood pressure pills, and again in the evening. After you've done this for a week, once or twice a month—or whatever your doctor recommends—is fine.
- Don't panic if one or two readings are higher than usual. Blood pressure changes throughout the day, sometimes from minute to minute. It's the trend that's important.
- Finally, share the results with your doctor.

Resources

Consumer Reports rated the The Omron 10 Series, BP786 (\$75) as its highest-rated arm monitor in the May 2015 issue of *Consumer Reports*. A complete list is available in the magazine. Subscribers can access the list online.

Information from: Harvard Health Publications (Harvard Medical School)

