NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.℠

Helping Hand™

Blood Pressure Measurement

Blood pressure is the force of the blood against the wall of any blood vessel. The blood pressure measurement is written in numbers with the systolic (sis-TAU-lick) blood pressure on top and the diastolic (DY-a-sta-lick) blood pressure on the bottom (for example, 110/ 60.)

- The **systolic blood pressure** is the pressure of the blood against the artery walls when the heart contracts (beats).
- The **diastolic blood pressure** is the pressure of the blood against the artery walls between heartbeats, when the heart relaxes.

Doctor's Order

Take the blood pressure on the child's

- ❑ right arm
- ❑ left arm
- ❑ right leg
- ❑ left leg

Take your child's blood pressure every day at these times: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your child's doctor (phone) _____ or _____.

- If the **systolic blood pressure** (top number) is: above _____ or below _____ for _____ blood pressure readings or for _____ hours.
- If the **diastolic blood pressure** (bottom number) is: above _____ or below _____ for _____ blood pressure readings or for _____ hours.

Other instructions: _____

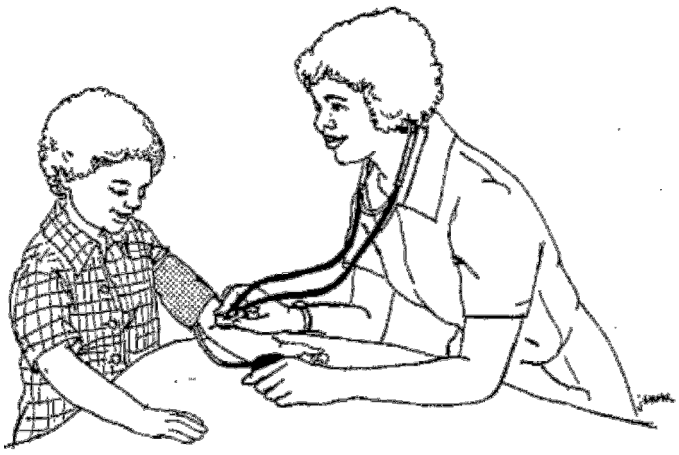
_____

Copyright 1978-2003, Nationwide Children's Hospital

How to Take a Blood Pressure Reading

Your child should be calm and still when you take his or her blood pressure (Picture 1). Try to keep your child from crying; crying makes the blood pressure higher.

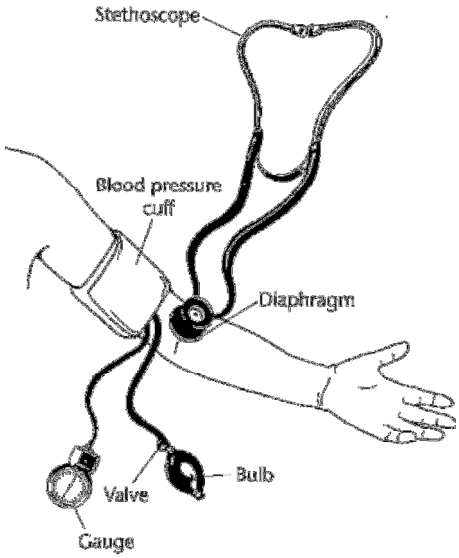
- An infant can be encouraged to drink a bottle, breast-feed or suck on a pacifier. (It helps if someone holds the baby to increase the feeling of security.)
- A toddler can hold the blood pressure cuff and pretend to take the BP of someone else, or practice on a teddy bear or doll.



Picture 1 Taking your child's blood pressure.

Your child will be less likely to cry if he is distracted this way.

1. Remove all clothing from your child's arm. Use the same arm each time as instructed by your doctor.
2. Turn the valve on the bulb counter-clockwise (to the left). Press all of the air out of the cuff.
3. Place the bottom edge of the cuff about 1 inch above your child's elbow. Wrap the cuff snugly with the tubing over the inner bend of the elbow (Picture 2).
4. Have your child turn his palm up, stretch his arm out, and rest his arm on a bed or table (Pictures 1 and 2).
5. Place the gauge so it is at your eye level.
6. Put the earpieces of the stethoscope into your ears.
7. Have your child relax his arm and hand. Press your fingertips on the skin at the inner bend of your child's elbow to find your child's pulse.
8. Place the flat part (diaphragm) of the stethoscope at the spot where you feel the pulse (Picture 2).
9. Turn the valve on the bulb clockwise (to the right) until it will turn no further.
10. Inflate the cuff rapidly (pump it up with air) by repeatedly squeezing the bulb. Inflate the cuff to _____ mm. of mercury reading on the pressure gauge.



Picture 2 Placement of the cuff.

11. Deflate the cuff slowly. To do this, slowly turn the valve counter-clockwise to release the air. Let the needle on the gauge move at an even rate of about 2 mm. (one marking) per second.
12. As you deflate the cuff, these are the 2 sounds you will listen for:
    - Clear, faint tapping (first beat heard)
    - Last beat heard

How to Take a Blood Pressure Reading, continued

13. The first sound heard will be the **clear, tapping sound**. When you hear it, look at the number on the gauge and remember this number.
    - Continue to deflate the cuff slowly and listen for the last beat or sound. Look at the gauge and remember this number.
    - After you hear the last beat, turn the valve counter-clockwise all the way to empty all the air from the cuff.
    - Write down the 2 numbers you have remembered. For example:

      120 First beat heard (systolic)

      60 Last beat heard (diastolic)
14. On the Daily Record or calendar, record the 2 numbers of the blood pressure reading and the time the blood pressure was taken. Record a question mark (?) if you are not sure of the reading on the gauge.
15. If you take the blood pressure a second time to double-check your reading, let your child's arm rest 2 minutes before inflating the cuff again.

Keeping a Record

It is important to keep a record of your child's blood pressure. Use the Daily Blood Pressure Record on this page, a regular calendar or the Helping Hand: *Daily Record* ,HH-3.

To record the blood pressure:

1. Write your child's blood pressure in the box for that day. For example, if your child's blood pressure is120/60 and 122/62 on the first day, you would record it as shown in the example below.
2. Please bring the record with you whenever you bring your child to see the doctor.

Example:

Daily Blood Pressure Record

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
11 ⌋ 120/60 8 am 122/62 4pm	12 ⌋	13 ⌋	14 ⌋	15 ⌋	16 ⌋	17 ⌋

Continued on page 4

Keeping a Record, continued

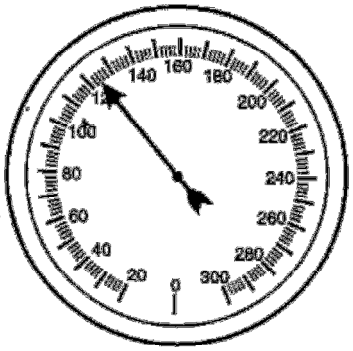
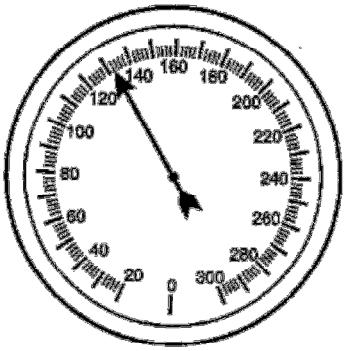
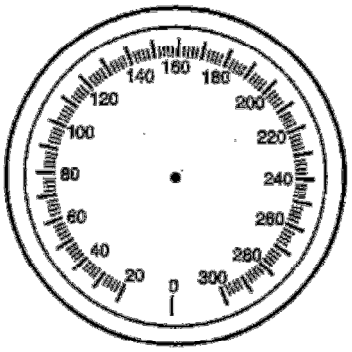
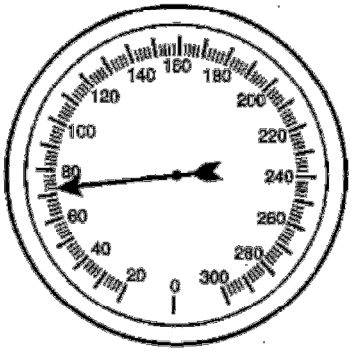
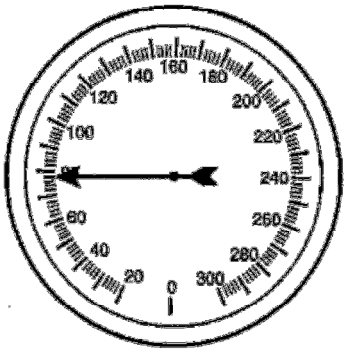
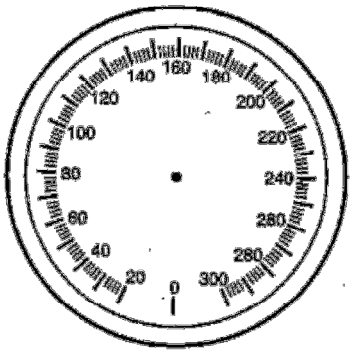
DAILY BLOOD PRESSURE RECORD FOR (Name) _____

MONTH _____

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Practice Taking the Blood Pressure

You have learned how to take the blood pressure and how to read the gauge. Now you can use this page to practice reading and recording the blood pressure.

1. What is this blood pressure measurement?	2. What is this blood pressure measurement?	3. Take your child's BP and draw the needle on the gauges.
First sound _____ 	First sound _____ 	First sound _____ 
Last sound _____ 	Last sound _____ 	Last sound _____ 
Answers: 124, 72	Answers: 132, 78	

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.