



**Getting the Right Blood  
Pressure Reading Every Time**  
How can you keep your numbers  
accurate?

By Ronda Behnke ND, CHomP, RN

John hated going to the doctor's office, but the pain in his knee was really starting to interfere with work. As he sat in the waiting room, he couldn't help but be fidgety. He hadn't seen the doctor for twelve years, and as far as he was concerned, another 12 years could go by and he wouldn't care. But he knew he had to come. He was concerned that something might really be wrong with his knee, something that Ibuprofen didn't fix anyway. Besides, lately he was popping Ibuprofen like it was candy.

After waiting for 30 minutes, he was called to the examination room. After checking his weight (he was a little overweight, but he was muscular the nurse said), he was escorted to the room. As soon as he sat down, the nurse asked a few questions, all of which were answered in about 1 minute. Then she took his blood pressure. The cuff barely circled his arm. She informed him it was a little high, 132/90. He saw her circle this on his chart, causing him more anxiety.

Instead of thinking about his knee pain, he began to think about the possibilities of having to take a prescription for "blood pressure." When the doctor came in, the first thing he mentioned was John's high blood pressure. Now John was really concerned! The doctor grabbed the blood pressure cuff and again took a reading. This time it was 140/96. John couldn't believe it.

After a quick exam and x-ray of John's knee, the doctor prescribed stronger pain medication and a high blood pressure pill for John, and set up a series of lab work and follow-up examinations.

John left the clinic with his head hanging low and despair in his heart. He had been diagnosed with hypertension, otherwise known as high blood pressure.

Does this sound familiar? You go to the doctor for either a routine physical or a non-emergency situation and are diagnosed with high blood pressure? You are not alone.

According to the University of Virginia Health System, a systolic blood pressure (the top number) can be an average of 14 points higher when the blood pressure reading is taken immediately upon arriving in the examination room. This 14 points can make a difference between a diagnosis of high blood pressure or not having this diagnosis. The person needs to be sitting approximately 5 minutes for the blood pressure to settle for a more-accurate level.

Also, anxiety can cause an increase in blood pressure of 10 points. There are many reasons a person could be anxious about going to see the doctor, whether it is concern over a pending diagnosis, physical pain or discomfort, or financial concerns; the more anxious the person is, the more elevated the blood pressure reading could be.

Cuff size is a much-overlooked cause of high blood pressure readings. There are four cuff sizes: pediatric (child), average, oversized, and thigh. The “average” size is intended for the average woman’s sized arm. Men, as a rule, have larger arms than women. A man who has any muscle should not have his blood pressure taken using the “average” cuff size; he needs the oversized cuff. The bladder of the cuff should extend itself around the whole arm. The bladder is NOT the entire cuff, but only about 2/3 of it.



If the cuff is too small, the reading will be elevated. If the cuff is too large, the reading will be lower.

The two main reasons blood pressure readings are elevated inaccurately are due to inappropriate cuff size and taking a reading before sitting or resting for 5 minutes. During those 5 minutes you are sitting, the nurse at the clinic can run and get the right sized cuff for you. These two interventions could lead to a more accurate reading of your blood pressure, and could make the difference between a diagnosis of high blood pressure, or not. Therefore, insist on waiting at least 5 minutes before having your blood pressure checked at the clinic.

If you tend to have your blood pressure checked at one of those blood pressure machines at a drug store, know that the readings are often wrong. Blood pressure machines such as these are rarely calibrated to check for accuracy. They also squeeze the person's arm so tight that it can damage the blood vessels in the arm and cause the user so much pain that the reading will automatically be higher.

Home blood pressure machines will be more accurate than those in a drug store as a person is usually more relaxed when taking his reading at home and the

#### **To Get an Accurate Blood Pressure Reading:**

- Use the correct blood pressure cuff size.
- Wait at least 5 minutes after walking before taking the reading.
- Wait at least ½ hour after eating or engaging in physical activity, including sexual intercourse.
- Wait until the body temperature normalizes when exposed to temperature extremes or after a fever.
- Do not take the reading during times of high stress or emotional situations.
- Do not take the reading when in pain.
- Do not use the blood pressure machines in a drug store.
- Have your personal home blood pressure machine calibrated annually.
- Take the readings three times then average them.

squeezing of the arm is usually less traumatic. Still, it is a good idea to take the machine to be calibrated annually to ensure that the readings are still accurate.

Monitoring the blood pressure is very important for health. However, higher than “average” readings have been linked to many health issues. When high blood pressure is a concern, seek the care of a Classical Homeopath to help the body heal itself and restore the blood pressure to normal. The first step towards healing is awareness. Always check your blood pressure accurately; your emotional status as well as your body will thank you.

Best wishes,

Dr. Ronda

**Disclaimer:** The information provided by Dr. Ronda is for educational purposes only. It is important that you not make health decisions or stop any medication without first consulting your personal physician or health care provider.



**Dr. Ronda Behnke is a distinguished practitioner of Classical Homeopathy and Natural Healing methods.**

Amongst her clients, she is known for her exceptional insight and non-judgmental presence. You can contact Dr. Ronda via the website [www.HomeopathicCentersofAmerica.org](http://www.HomeopathicCentersofAmerica.org) or by calling 920-321-0008. "When it's time to heal, call me...I will listen to you." For a FREE guide to help you along your healing path, visit the HCA website noted above.

© 2010 Ronda F. Behnke

No part of this article can be copied or reprinted without the expressed written authorization by Ronda F. Behnke.