

## Preparing patients for blood pressure measurement

### What is *patient preparation*?

The steps that you use to measure blood pressure for every patient.

### Why is *patient preparation* important?

Hypertension treatment cut-offs come from clinical trials where researchers prepared patients in a way that let their bodies relax and their blood pressure settle as much as possible.

Factors that lead to falsely high or low BP readings	
When this occurs...	BP readings can erroneously appear...
Patient is talking or fidgeting	10-15 mmHg <b>higher</b>
Patient's back is not supported	5-15 mmHg <b>higher</b>
Cuff is too small for patient's arm	10-40 mmHg <b>higher</b>
Putting a BP cuff over clothing	10-40 mmHg <b>higher</b> or <b>lower</b>
Cuff on patient's arm is lower than heart-level	1-2 mmHg <b>higher</b> per inch below heart level
Cuff on patient's arm is higher than heart level	1-2 mmHg <b>lower</b> per inch above heart level
Patient's legs are crossed	5-8 mmHg <b>higher</b>
Patient's feet are dangling	5-15 mmHg <b>higher</b>
Patient has a full bladder	10-15 mmHg <b>higher</b>
Patient does not have a rest period	10-20 mmHg <b>higher</b>
The BP cuff is deflated too fast	Variable amounts <b>higher</b> or <b>lower</b>
Patient has only 1 BP reading	10-20 mmHg <b>higher</b>

Thus it is important to follow the steps used in clinical trials as closely as possible so that your blood pressure readings accurately predict whether patients should be treated for high blood pressure. Although, in clinical settings, it can be difficult to follow every step for every patient (e.g., giving patients a 5-minute rest period), you can improve the accuracy of your blood pressure readings by preparing your patient with *seven steps*.

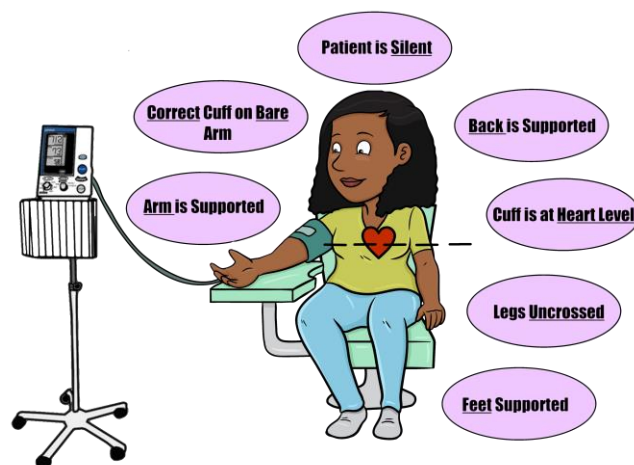
### When do you *prepare patients* for blood pressure measurement?

Every time that you measure blood pressure.

### How should you *prepare patients* for blood pressure measurement?

Seat your patient in a chair:

- Their arm should be bare
- Use the correct cuff size on their upper arm
- Sitting quietly without talking, reading or texting
- With their back supported
- With their arm supported so that the middle of the cuff is at heart level
- With their legs uncrossed
- With their feet supported on the floor or on a stool



### Helpful tips

- Measure the blood pressure before painful activities like checking fingersticks or administering vaccinations
- [OTHERS]

### For more information

- Pickering, T. G., et al. (2005). "Recommendations for blood pressure measurement in humans and experimental animals: part 1: blood pressure measurement in humans: a statement for professionals from the Subcommittee of Professional and Public Education of the American Heart Association Council on High Blood Pressure Research." Circulation **111**(5): 697-716.

**And check out the training modules and other materials at [[www.richlifeprogram.org](http://www.richlifeprogram.org)]**