Accurate Blood Pressure Tips

- Use the proper size cuff; if two cuff sizes fit, use the larger one.
- Place the cuff on a bare arm.
- Place the artery marker over the brachial artery.
- Apply the cuff snugly, allowing room for no more than two fingers underneath.
- Have the patient sit quietly for a few minutes.
- Do not talk to the patient while taking a blood pressure.
- Support the patient’s back and feet; keep legs uncrossed.
- Keep the upper arm at heart level with the lower arm passively supported, i.e. resting on lap.
- Keep the arm still during the measurement cycle.

Blood Pressure Variability

The following activities affect a blood pressure reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Systolic (mmHg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuff too small</td>
<td>10 to 40 ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuff over clothing</td>
<td>10 to 40 ↑ or ↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back/feet unsupported</td>
<td>5 to 15 ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legs crossed</td>
<td>5 to 8 ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not resting 3 to 5 minutes</td>
<td>10 to 20 ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient talking</td>
<td>10 to 15 ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labored breathing</td>
<td>5 to 8 ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full bladder</td>
<td>10 to 15 ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>10 to 30 ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm below heart level</td>
<td>1.8 /inch ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm above heart level</td>
<td>1.8 /inch ↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For references, refer to the footnotes listed on this card.
References