

7 Practical Steps to Ensure an Accurate Blood Pressure Reading

Before taking blood pressure check that the patient is well. Taking blood pressure when the patient is acutely unwell e.g. with an infection or in pain, or has been acutely unwell very recently, should be avoided.

1

DON'T TAKE THE MEASUREMENT OVER CLOTHES

Taking a BP over clothing can increase the measurement by 10–40mmHg.

2

AVOID TALKING & USE OF MOBILES

Talking can add 10–15mmHg.
No talking, texting, scrolling or watching the phone.

3

UNCROSS THE LEGS

Crossed legs can add 2–8mmHg.

4

SIT WITH YOUR BACK STRAIGHT AND SUPPORTED

An unsupported back can add 5–10mmHg.

5

FEET SHOULD BE FLAT ON THE FLOOR

Unsupported feet can add 5–10mmHg.

6

ARM SHOULD BE SUPPORTED ON A FLAT SURFACE

An unsupported arm can add 10mmHg – if arm below heart level readings will be too high. If arm above heart level readings will be too low.

7

PLAN AHEAD

Avoid things that can raise the blood pressure in the short term. Patient should be calm and relaxed and advised not to drink caffeine, smoke or exercise for 30 minutes before the reading is taken. If patient needs to use the toilet, they should go before the reading is taken (a full bladder adds 10 – 15mmHg).

