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HOME BLOOD PRESSURE MONITORING

The most important recent advance in blood pressure management is utilizing the blood pressure readings the patient obtains at home. That is because many people experience “white coat hypertension”: or blood pressure elevated only in the office; and others experience “masked hypertension”: lower readings in the office. In addition, home monitoring gives us both a more accurate picture of what your blood pressure is during various times of the day.

While the best way to monitor blood pressure is with 24-hour ambulatory monitoring, this is generally not available in this country- or is not covered by insurance. Therefore, I recommend home blood pressure monitoring (HBP) according to the following guidelines:

- Take your blood pressure in the morning on one day, and the evening on another.
- Make sure you are calm for several minutes, and have not just had a cup of coffee or cigarette (ever!)
- Obtain a cuff that goes around your upper arm
- For each session, you will take 3 readings waiting a couple of minutes between each reading.
- Discard the first reading, and average the second readings. For example, if you obtain: 165/80, 142/74, and 138/70, discard the 165/80 (the first reading is usually abnormally high) and average the next two: in this case= 140/72. Record only the average into a log book.
- After 6-12 sessions we will be able to determine the effect of a medication, or whether a pill should be started or discontinued
- Remember: use the arm that gives the higher reading.

While this might seem like quite a bother, it will help prevent the over-treatment (and occasional under-treatment) so common in blood pressure management.

