Module 8: Lifelong Health and Wellness
Topic 3 Content: Measuring Blood Pressure Notes

Introduction

Systolic blood pressure can be measured with or without a cuff. However, you cannot measure diastolic blood pressure without the use of equipment. In this interactivity, learn how to measure blood pressure two different ways. Click each button to learn the two different methods of measuring blood pressure.

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Measuring Blood Pressure without a Cuff

Typically, blood pressure is measured using a blood pressure cuff, also known as a sphygmomanometer. This device is able to provide an accurate measure of both your systolic and diastolic blood pressure. Your systolic pressure can also be measured without the use of a blood pressure cuff. Your diastolic pressure, however, cannot be measured without the use of a blood pressure cuff and a stethoscope.

To measure your systolic blood pressure without a cuff, you will need to detect your radial pulse. You should be able to find it at the spot below your thumb and just slightly above your wrist. If you can feel your radial pulse, then your systolic blood pressure is at least 80. If your blood pressure drops below 80, the radial pulse is very hard detect without equipment.

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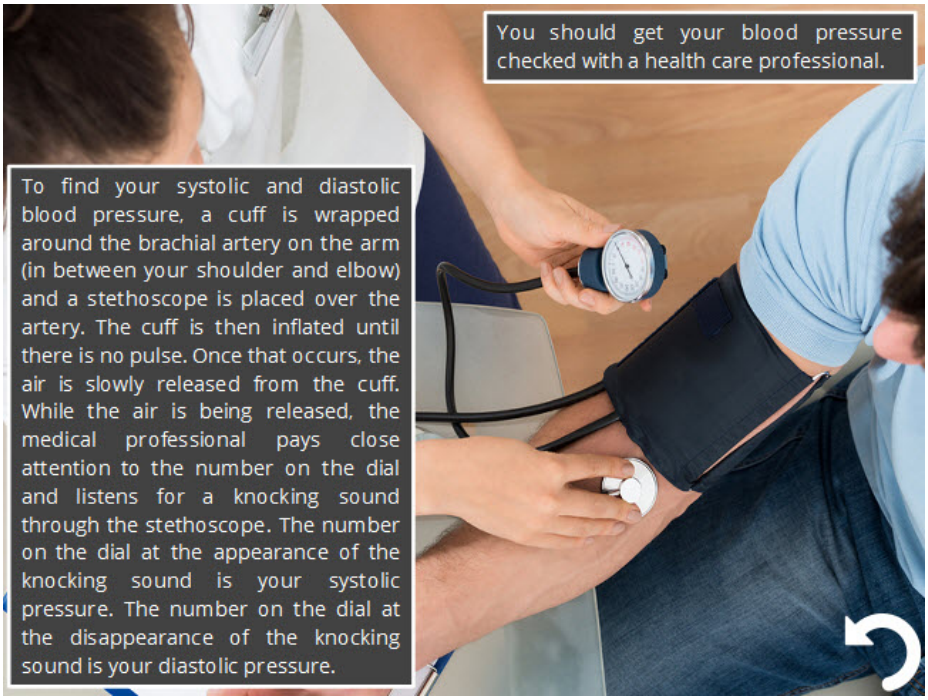
Measuring Blood Pressure with a Cuff



To determine your exact blood pressure measurements or to measure your diastolic pressure you should have your blood pressure assessed by a health care professional. To find your systolic and diastolic blood pressure, a cuff is wrapped around the brachial artery on the arm (in between your shoulder and elbow) and a stethoscope is placed over the artery. The cuff is then inflated until there is no pulse. Once that occurs, the air is slowly released from the cuff. While the air is being released, the medical professional pays close attention to the number on the dial and listens for a knocking sound through the stethoscope. The number on the dial at the appearance of the knocking sound is your systolic pressure. The number on the dial at the disappearance of the knocking sound is your diastolic pressure. Your systolic pressure is written above your diastolic pressure like in the example 120/80.