#### LADTECTO

# **Blood-pressure monitors**

### Our latest tests found highly accurate self-test models

**OR PEOPLE** with borderline or high blood pressure, home testing is more important than ever.

Recent research shows that an average of several readings over time provides the most reliable measurement. Home testing is essential for taking multiple readings and can actually be more accurate than the results obtained at a doctor's office.

Our most recent tests of 19 blood-pressure monitors found 13 that are worth recommending.

Thirty-two staff members, some who have high blood pressure, assessed each model for comfort. Our testers compared the readings from those devices with readings taken with a mercury sphygmo-

manometer, often used in medical settings, to rate accuracy. They also timed how long it took the numbers to register. A sensory panel evaluated how easy it was to use each monitor. Several were rated Excellent for accuracy, including two wrist models, the first of that type that we've recommended.

#### Two accurate wrist models

The newly tested wrist monitors from Omron and Rite Aid were just as accurate as the best arm models we tested and were generally more comfortable. They are attached to the wrist and then held against the chest at heart level. That placement appears to reduce errors, compared with other wrist models that are supposed to be held in front of you at heart level.

Our tests also revealed some technological features, such as a built-in sensor in the Omron wrist monitor that prevents it from starting if it's held incorrectly. And the iHealth Dock BP3 can interact with Apple mobile devices to store and chart your readings. But not all features work well. The top-rated arm monitor,

the Omron 10 series BP785, has a cuff guide that is claimed to alert you if it has been positioned incorrectly. It worked

when the cuff was applied loosely but faltered in our tests when the cuff was placed in the wrong position on the arm.



Whether or not you want a blood-pressure monitor that has high-tech circuitry or fancy features, you'll need one that at least measures your blood pressure accurately and stores the readings. All of our recommended models performed well in our tests, but to find the best monitor for you, consider the following:

**Fit.** Using a cuff that's the wrong size can result in a bad reading. Most models we tested have two cuffs or a one-size-fits-all. Make sure your choice fits well.

**Accuracy.** All of our recommended models were rated Excellent for accuracy.

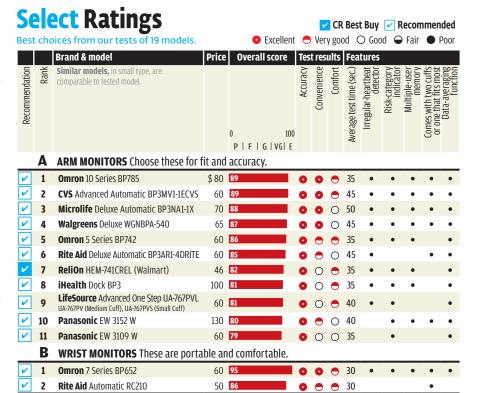
**Cost.** The recommended models in the Ratings were priced from \$46 to \$130, but shop around. And check to see whether a monitor is covered by insurance.

**Ease of use.** Make sure that the display on the monitor is easy to read and understand and that the buttons are big enough. The directions for applying the cuff and operating the monitor should be clear.

**Available features.** An irregular-heartbeat detector checks for arrhythmias and other abnormalities. A risk-category indicator tells you whether your blood pressure is in the high range. Multipleuser memory allows two or more users to save readings. The data-averaging function allows you to take multiple readings and get an overall average.



KEEP IT CLOSE For accuracy, hold the wrist monitor near your chest at heart level.



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A1 Omron

B1 Omron

#### Overview

All our recommended models scored Excellent for accuracy. Wrist models are generally more comfortable and smaller than arm-cuff models. If the monitor will be used by more than one person, choose models with multiple-user memory and a one-size-fits-all cuff.

#### Best overall:

**A1 Omron** \$80

**B1 Omron** \$60

A1, the top-rated arm cuff monitor, has a one-size-fits-all cuff that is rigid and easier to use, an irregular-heartbeat detector, multiple-user memory, and a TruRead mode that takes an average of three consecutive readings. B1, the top-rated wrist model and the highest-scoring model overall, has an irregular-heartbeat detector, multiple-user memory, and a positioning indicator that prevents it from taking a reading when it's held incorrectly.

#### Easy to use:

A2 CVS \$60

A3 Microlife \$70

A10 Panasonic \$130

A2 and A3 are top performers that have large buttons and displays. Both have risk-category indicators, and A3 also has software that allows you to download your readings to a computer. A10 allows the user to insert an arm and push a button to take a reading, similar to models available in drugstores or supermarkets, but its design limits arm size.

#### **Best value:**

#### A7 ReliOn \$46 CR Best Buy

This model has a large display and buttons and is the only CR Best Buy at \$46. It has an irregular-heartbeat detector, a risk-category indicator, and multiple-user memory. The large cuff is sold separately.

#### **Good for techies:**

A8 iHealth \$100

This monitor is controlled by the touch screen of an iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch. We tested it using the iPhone. Download a free app and plug in the device to take and save up to 9,999 readings that can be shared with medical providers. The iHealth dock was accurate but lost points on convenience because it requires another device.

From the Experts at Consumer Reports

## **Test Your** HEART SMARTS

True or False: (Check your answers below)	True	False
1. Everyone should have an exercise stress test for their heart		
2. Avocados are one of the best fruits for your heart		
3. A simple test on your legs can help prevent a heart attack		

ften, it's the little-known facts like these that can make a huge difference in your life. That's why you'll want to read CON-SUMER REPORTS ON HEALTH. It brings you objective facts to help you make smart decisions about your health.

- 1. No, most people can do without an exercise stress test. Experts say that it yields too many false-positive results, resulting in unnecessary treatments and anxiety.
- **2. Yes, avocados can be good for your heart** because they contain certain vitamins that help reduce levels of artery-damaging homocysteine in your body.
- 3. And yes, if you have pain in your legs, you should be tested for **peripheral artery disease**—which makes you 5 to 7 times more likely than others to suffer a heart attack or stroke.

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