

Blood-pressure monitors

Our latest tests found highly accurate self-test models

FOR 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 sphygmomanometer, 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.



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

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.

How to choose

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. Multiple-user memory allows two or more users to save readings. The data-averaging function allows you to take multiple readings and get an overall average.

Select Ratings

Best choices from our tests of 19 models.

CR Best Buy Recommended

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results		Features							
					Accuracy	Convenience	Comfort	Average test time (sec.)	Irregular-heartbeat detector	Risk-category indicator	Multiple-user memory	Comes with two cuffs or one that fits most	Data-averaging function	
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		0 100										

A ARM MONITORS Choose these for fit and accuracy.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Omron 10 Series BP785	\$ 80	89	●	●	●	35	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	CVS Advanced Automatic BP3MV1-1ECVS	60	89	●	●	●	45	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Microlife Deluxe Automatic BP3NA1-1X	70	88	●	●	○	50	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Walgreens Deluxe WGNBPA-540	65	87	●	●	○	45	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Omron 5 Series BP742	60	86	●	●	●	35	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Rite Aid Deluxe Automatic BP3AR1-4DRITE	60	85	●	●	○	45	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	ReliOn HEM-741CREL (Walmart)	46	82	●	○	●	35	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	iHealth Dock BP3	100	81	●	○	●	35	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	LifeSource Advanced One Step UA-767PVL UA-767PV (Medium Cuff), UA-767PVS (Small Cuff)	60	81	●	○	●	40	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Panasonic EW 3152 W	130	80	●	●	○	40	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Panasonic EW 3109 W	60	79	●	○	○	35	●	●	●	●	●	●

B WRIST MONITORS These are portable and comfortable.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Omron 7 Series BP652	60	95	●	●	●	30	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Rite Aid Automatic RC210	50	86	●	●	●	30	●	●	●	●	●	●

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,



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 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Avocados are one of the best fruits for your heart | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. A simple test on your legs can help prevent a heart attack | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Often, 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 CONSUMER 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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