

Title: Do I Have White-Coat Hypertension or Hypertension? : What you should do to check your blood pressure

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Abstract: Many patients report that they have elevated blood pressures when they go to the doctor's office, but normal pressures when measured sporadically at places such as a grocery store. This is white-coat hypertension. Because sustained hypertension can have such bad effects on one's health, differentiating white-coat hypertension from sustained hypertension is very important. This pamphlet is designed to help patients monitor their blood pressure to determine whether their elevated clinic reading is due to white-coat hypertension or hypertension. Patients that have persistently elevated office readings with no end-organ damage should first self-measure their blood pressure for at least 3 days at 12 hr intervals. If elevated, treatment may be initiated, and if normal, ambulatory blood pressure measurements are needed to rule out sustained hypertension.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

Additional Information:

American Heart Association
<http://www.americanheart.org>

**American Academy of
Family Physicians**
<http://aafp.org>

DASH Diet
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/introduction.html>

Omron HEM monitors
http://omronwebstore.com/category/blood_pressure_monitors



References:

Hond ED, et. al. Self-measured versus ambulatory blood pressure in the diagnosis of hypertension. J Hypertens. 2003;21(4):717-22.

Reeves, RA. Does this patient have hypertension? How to measure blood pressure. JAMA. 1995;273(15):1211-1218.

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Do I Have White-Coat Hypertension



Or Hypertension?

What you should do to check
your blood pressure

What is Hypertension?

It is when the pressure of your blood against your vessels is too high. It is also known as **high blood pressure**. Your doctor measures it with a cuff to get two numbers: the high top (systolic) and the lower bottom (diastolic).

	Systolic	Diastolic
Normal	< 120	< 80
Hypertension	≥140	≥ 90

Why is it bad?



- * It has no symptoms
- * It causes heart and blood vessel disease which lead to:
 - * Stroke and heart attack
 - * Kidney disease
 - * Vision problems
- * It lowers life expectancy

How do I know if I have it?

It takes at least two separate measurements of a blood pressure of $\geq 140/\geq 90$ mmHg to diagnose hypertension. If your pressure is elevated at one visit you should make another appointment with your doctor to have your pressure rechecked.

What is White Coat Hypertension?

It is when your blood pressure is elevated ($\geq 140/\geq 90$) at the doctor's office, but normal everywhere else. It may happen if you are nervous about the doctor's appointment.



Is it bad?

No. Studies have shown that a temporary rise in blood pressure at the doctor's office is not bad for your health.

How do I know if I have it?

Self-monitoring

You can measure your pressures at home with a digital blood pressure monitor like the Omron HEM monitors (\$30-\$150). You should take morning, evening, and if possible, midday readings for at least three days and bring your results to your doctor. If your pressures are high ($\geq 135/\geq 85$), you and your doctor will discuss ways to treat your blood pressure. If normal, further testing, like ambulatory testing, may be needed.



Ambulatory monitoring

For this test, you wear a lightweight cuff, computer and cuff compressor that automatically check your pressures every 15-30 min for at least 24 hrs. This is a great test because your pressures change during the day with different activities so this gives a reliable average. It also lets your doctor know how your pressures are affecting your body better than clinic or home measurements. High pressures are $\geq 135/\geq 85$.

Visit your doctor

If you have either of these conditions, it is important for you and your health to work with your doctor to regularly check your pressures.

