Measure accurately

Screening checklist
When screening patients for high blood pressure:
- Use a validated, automated device to measure BP
- Use the correct cuff size on a bare arm
- Ensure patient is positioned correctly

Confirmatory checklist
If screening blood pressure is ≥140/90 mm Hg, obtain a confirmatory measurement:
- Repeat screening steps above
- Ensure patient has an empty bladder
- Ensure patient has rested quietly for at least five minutes
- Obtain the average of at least three BP measurements

Act rapidly
If patient has blood pressure ≥140/90 mm Hg confirmed:
- Use an evidence-based protocol to guide treatment
- Re-assess patient every 2–4 weeks until BP is controlled
- Whenever possible, prescribe single-pill combination therapy

Partner with patients, families and communities
To empower patients to control their blood pressure:
- Engage patients using evidence-based communication strategies
- Help patients accurately self-measure BP
- Direct patients and families to resources that support medication adherence and healthy lifestyles

Evidence-based protocols typically include
- Counsel on and reinforce lifestyle modifications
- Ensure early follow-up and add preferred medications in a step-wise fashion, until BP is controlled
- For most patients, give preference to:
  - Thiazide diuretics
  - Dihydropyridine calcium channel blockers
  - ACE inhibitors (ACEI) or
  - Angiotensin receptor blockers (ARB)
- Do not prescribe both ACEI and ARB to same patient
- If BP ≥160/100 mm Hg, start therapy with two medications or a single pill combination

Evidence-based lifestyle changes to lower BP include
- Following the DASH diet, which is rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains; low-fat dairy, poultry, fish and plant-based oils; and limits sodium, sweets, sugary drinks, red meat and saturated fats
- Engaging in moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, for 40 minutes a day at least four days a week
- Maintaining a healthy body mass index (BMI)
- Limiting alcohol to ≤2 drinks/day in men, ≤1 drink/day in women

Evidence-based tips for correct positioning
Ensure patient is seated comfortably with:
- Back supported
- Arm supported
- Cuff at heart level
- Legs uncrossed
- Feet flat on the ground or supported by a foot stool
- No one talking during measurement

Evidence-based communication strategies include
- Begin with open-ended questions about adherence, including recent medication use
- Explore reasons for possible non-adherence
- Elicit patient views on options and priorities to customize a care plan for each patient
- Remain non-judgmental at all times
- Use teach-back to ensure understanding of the care plan

Evidence-based tips for patient self-measurement of BP
- Instruct patient to measure BP accurately using a validated, automated device and correct positioning for measurement
- Ask patient to record ≥2 morning BP measurements and ≥2 evening BP measurements for ≥ 4 consecutive days between office visits
- Develop a systematic approach to ensure patients can act rapidly to address elevated BP readings between office visits
- Counsel patients that self-measured BP ≥135/85 mm Hg is considered elevated

These checklists are not intended to be comprehensive. Additions and modifications to fit local practice are encouraged.
References


