

Welcome to Q-tips for your Ears podcast series. During each

session, we will highlight a new topic to improve healthcare

quality and patient outcomes. My name is Tammy Wagner and today

we will be speaking with my colleague Kaiser. We are both

registered nurses and quality improvement advisors with Great

Plains Quality, Innovation network, the quality improvement

organization for North and South Dakota. We appreciate you tuning

in today. Our subject is self measured blood pressure

monitoring.

The how and why? Hello, Dee. Tammy, it's good to be here with

you and our listeners before we talk about self measured blood

pressure monitoring. Would you give us a quick overview of

hypertension or high blood pressure as it's more commonly

called? It's causes signs and symptoms and the problems it can

cause? I sure will. High blood pressure, also called

hypertension is blood pressure that is higher than normal. Your

blood pressure changes throughout the day based on your

activities.

If you're having blood pressure measurements consistently above

your normal, you may have a diagnosis of high blood pressure

or.

Hypertension.

My blood pressure usually has no warning signs or symptoms, and

many people don't know they have it, so having your blood

pressure measured is the only way to know whether you have

high blood pressure or not.

High blood pressure usually develops over time. It can

happen because of unhealthy lifestyle choices such as not

getting enough regular physical activity, certain health

conditions such as diabetes, and having obesity can also increase

the risk for developing high blood pressure. High blood

pressure can also happen during pregnancy. It can damage your

health in many ways. It can seriously hurt important organs

like your heart, brain, kidneys and eyes.

The good news is that in most cases you can manage your blood

pressure to lower your risk for serious health problems, your

healthcare team will diagnose high blood pressure and make

treatment decisions by reviewing your systolic. That's the top

number, OK, and diastolic, the bottom number, blood pressure

levels and comparing them to levels found in evidence based

guidelines. These guidelines are used to diagnose high blood

pressure currently.

The 2017 guidelines from the American Heart Association say a

systolic that's the top number reading of 130 or higher, and a

diastolic that's the bottom #80 or higher, is hypertension. But

the important thing is to talk with your healthcare team and

develop a blood pressure goal that is right for you. These

goals need to be specifically done for you. Unfortunately,

only about one in four adults with hypertension.

Have their blood pressure at their goal. Ohh, that's not

good. Thank you for that overview. So in 2017 is when

they changed it, it used to be what 140 / 90 systolic, 90

diastolic and they reduce that.

So does doing self measured blood pressure help people get

to their blood pressure goal?

Yes, current guidelines say one

of the ways to help people get to goal and stay at goal is to

do self measured blood pressure monitoring, self measured blood

pressure or SMBP is using a personal blood pressure monitor

device at home. These automatic devices are easy and safe to

use.

Thank you. I have a few of those at home.

There are several different types of blood pressure

monitors. How does a person choose the best one? Sure. Well,

the American Heart Association recommends an automatic cuff

style that goes over the bicep, the upper arm monitor. There are

other kinds. There's the wrist and finger monitors. They are

not recommended because they give less reliable readings.

You wanna make sure to choose a monitor that has been validated?

What does that mean? If you're unsure, you need to ask your

doctor or the pharmacist for advice or find options at a

website called validatebp.org.

And that will help you with the different models and different

organizations that make them as to which ones are valid. And

that's great when you're selecting a blood pressure

monitor for someone who's a senior or a pregnant woman or a

child, make sure it is validated for those conditions. Meaning

it's something that is, the cuff is small enough for a child or

it's validated to take accurate blood pressures on pregnant

women seniors because there are different.

Uh, there are different specifications in those blood

pressure monitors for those groups, so it is definitely not

a one size fits everybody. OK, you want to make sure the cuff

fits. So you measure around your upper arm that that biceps area

and choose a monitor that comes with the correct cuff size. So

yes, I know a lot of people just go into the pharmacy, pick up a

blood pressure, they order it online and you know, the cuff

could be too small. The cuff could be too big.

These will definitely affect your blood pressure readings. I

really recommend talking to your medical team or the pharmacist

first about what type of monitor is right for you and making sure

that you receive training on how to use it correctly. I think you

and I have both talked about the wrist blood pressure monitors,

iPad family members that have had those. I think maybe you

have seen them used or have had family members. I have one and

one of the things that.

I've seen people do is they they don't take their risk that the

blood pressure cuff is on and place it up over by their left

shoulder. And you know, a large majority of those that are blood

pressures, that is the proper

way to take it. So you gotta

read your instructions, get some training. Yes, I'm a nurse. I

didn't know that before until talking to you and some other

team members. And I went out and got the correct kind of blood

pressure cuffs so I could monitor mine at home.

So many things, right? So once you've purchased your monitor,

bring it to your next appointment.

Have the doctor check to see that you're using it correctly

and getting the same results as the equipment in the office, and

then plan to bring your monitor in at least once a year to make

sure the readings are accurate. So what that means is they take

a blood pressure with their machines, whether they're doing

a manual one with the stethoscope or whether they're

using one that is digital readout. That's electronic. And

then you take yours and see if it's things can be about 20%

off, OK, top number, bottom number.

And so you just want to make sure that you're in that range

in the range. OK, now that a person has their monitor knows

how to use it. What are some tips to make sure the reading is

accurate? Right. Question taking

it correctly is so important,
especially if your treatment is
based on the readings, which
would include medication changes
for a big one. And you don't
want readings that are high when
they're really aren't. So you
wanna be still don't smoke,
drink caffeinated beverages or
exercise within 30 minutes
before measuring your blood
pressure.

And here's one that I didn't
know until I started with
chronic management of diseases.
It's empty your bladder. Ohh.

And ensure at least 5 minutes of
quiet rest before measurements.

Don't talk or read during the
measurement period. Sit

correctly. Sit with your back
straight and supported like on a

dining room chair rather than
like a sofa or recliner. Your

feet should be flat on the floor
and your legs should not be

crossed.

Your arm should be supported on
a flat surface such as a table

with the upper arm at heart
level. OK OK, make sure the

bottom of the cuff is placed
directly above the bend of the

elbow and you wanna check your
monitors instructions. There's

usually an illustration in there
of how to put it on correctly.

Sometimes it's right on the cup.
Yeah, they have a picture of it.

Or of course, you can ask your
healthcare provider. You can go

to a pharmacy. They all know how
to do it correctly.

Like I've seen an arrow pointing
down so that it's right at the

crook of elbow when you put that
inside. OK, the elbow. Yep. You

wanna measure at the same time
every day? It's important to

take the readings at the same
time each day, such as in the

morning or in the evening. And
it's best to take the readings

daily. However, ideally
beginning two weeks after a

change in treatment and during
the week before your next

appointment. So if you go in and
they change your medication,

it's important.

For two weeks to make sure that
you're getting, you know, your

blood pressures taken, but you
also have to remember that that

medication has to have a little
time to work. So you don't wanna

be, you know, having anxiety
over the readings. If you've

taken your first pill of that
blood pressure medicine and

you're not seeing a big, drastic
change, you gotta let the

medication work. And that's why
they say the two weeks after

medication change, because

that's usually enough time to
give that medicine to work. And
when you were talking about
taking them at the same time,
like, if you take it in the
morning.

Take it every morning or in the
evening. Why is that? Well, some

of that is because of the
medication works. OK, so you

wanna make sure that not only
are you taking your blood

pressure at the same time, but
that you're taking your blood

pressure medication at the same
time, and then you, your body.

Like like I said earlier, your
blood pressure goes up and down

throughout the day depending on
your activities. So you wanna

make sure that you're getting
consistent times of the day so

that your body is in a
consistent state when you're

taking it. So that makes sense
if you just.

Usually first thing in the
morning is a good time to take

it before the anxiety of the day
has caught up with you. But a

lot of people take it before
they go to bed too, so.

It you wanna also take multiple
readings and record the results

so each time you measure take
two or three readings one minute

apart. OK and record the results
using a log or tracker and the

reason why it's important to use something we could maybe

download off the Internet or ask your provider for a long or a

tracker or sometimes the pharmacies drugstores have them

is because of the way the tracker or the log is designed.

OK.

When people come in with a notebook and they just start

writing down blood pressures, it's hard to know well, was this

first in the, you know, thing in the morning? Was this in the

afternoon? So if the paper that you're writing on is divided up

into three sections, maybe morning, afternoon, evening or

whenever you choose to take it or whatever your provider has

asked you to do, it's very easy then to look at that and see all

the morning once in one glance, all the OK, some of the meters

are monitors.

Actually have a download ability so you can download all of your

readings and send it over to your provider or your provider

can download them. So you want to make sure you take those

readings to your appointments and.

Don't take the measurement over clothes. I see that happen a

lot. Clothing can of struct. If

it's too tight around your arm

and the other thing is don't
push your sleeve up and make a

make a big wad up under your arm
because that can restrict blood

flow and you don't get an
accurate reading. Yeah. So not

only are these tips how to take
a self measured blood pressure,

but at home.

But these are the same things
you should do when your blood

pressure is taken at your
doctor's office, which it's very

hard to speak up when your
doctors, nurse, or medical aid,

or whomever is taking that blood
pressure after they've just

brought you back from the
waiting room since you down. Put

that cuff on for me. I'm short.
So I'm sitting on an exam table,

no back to lean against and my
feet don't touch the little step

even. And they're talking and.

Asking all kinds of questions.
Yes. So it you know, you have to

be romantic date and you have to
say I would like to sit in the

chair and I learned that this is
the best way to take an accurate

blood pressure. So you just have
to remember that they could be

making medication changes based
on the blood pressure readings

that they get. You bet you are
the best part of that healthcare

team as yourself.

So these blood pressure machines can be costly. Does insurance

cover them? Unfortunately, many public and private health

insurance plans do not cover the cost of self monitoring devices.

Unfortunately, prices for a typical high quality device that

are available for purchase at most drug stores can range

between \$50.00 and 150. But I would ask your medical team,

especially your pharmacist, if they have any coupons or

discounts available to help cover that cost.

OK, so I just wanna be clear home monitoring.

Or self measured blood pressure? Is this a substitute for regular

visits?

Absolutely not, absolutely not. You need to make sure to keep

all of your scheduled visits with your physician or your

medical team know whether that be the nurse practitioner or PA

whatever. Just this is an additional tool that you have

that you can measure at home, and you'll talk with your

provider if that's something that's advised for you to do

about, you know, when do I call you? Give me some parameters.

When is my blood pressure considered way too high? And I

need to call.

When is it too low and I need to call too low of a blood

pressure, especially in elderly. Can increase falls? Yeah, that's

the last thing you wanna do is have two low blood pressure.

Absolutely. So yes. And your provider can also let you know

when it's in a danger zone and you need to go to the ER. So

those are all things that you got to talk about. All right.

Well, thank you, Dee. Yeah, it's my pleasure. And I do wanna

mention that the guidance I've shared today is from the

American Heart Association.

And the million hearts, which is part of the CDC Centers for

Disease Control, it's a sponsored program. And of

course, you can find these resources on our

greatplainsqin.org website. All right. Well, thank you again, we

hope that you enjoyed today's Q-tips for your ear session and

we look forward to connecting with you next time. Have a great

day.