

## Chapter 1

### 1. Hello, I'm Dr. Jandel Allen-Davis.

Now that you've been told by your doctor that you have hypertension or what is more commonly know as high blood pressure, I'm sure a lot of questions and concerns have been running through your mind. The first thing I want to do is assure you that, while hypertension is a serious condition – there are many things that **you** can do to control it. At Kaiser Permanente our goal is to help you live a long and healthy life.

2. Listen to this statistic. High blood pressure causes about 100,000 *unnecessary* deaths each year. Frightening isn't it? But remember, I said *unnecessary* deaths. High blood pressure can be fatal if people don't take the right steps to control it. This dvd will give you the information and the tools you need to control your blood pressure and stay healthy.

3. Now I strongly suggest you watch all of the sections on this dvd. In fact, invite your family or a friend to watch with you. It will help them understand how important it is for you to control your blood pressure. My patients often tell me that their family and friends are their biggest cheerleaders. Their support is so helpful when you are making important changes in your life. On this dvd you'll learn the latest information and what you can do.

4. And you'll also meet other Kaiser Permanente members just like yourself. These are people who - along with taking their medications - have made healthy changes to their way of life and now have their blood pressure under control. They want to share their stories and, yes, their challenges. But most of all they want to encourage you. Now the chapters on this dvd are only about 6 – 8 minutes long and I think you'll find going back and reviewing these sections from time to time will be helpful too.

5. In the U.S., one out of three people have hypertension so you're certainly not alone! We know that hypertension is a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke. That's why it so important for your health

that you do everything you can to control your blood pressure. Some other risk factors include smoking, high cholesterol, having diabetes, and being overweight or physically inactive. Be sure to talk with your doctor about *your* risk factors of heart attack or stroke and what you can do to lower that risk. You'll see on this dvd that Kaiser Permanente offers many ways to help you keep that risk as low as possible.

I want to thank you for taking the time to watch this. And just know that we're here to support your commitment to your good health. So let's get going!

## Chapter 2

1. You've been diagnosed with a medical condition known as hypertension. The simple name for hypertension is high blood pressure. You may have heard your doctor use this term. It's a medical condition that is the leading cause of heart attack and stroke. Hello, I'm Steven St. James and I represent the Prevention Department at Kaiser Permanente. Fortunately, there are many things that you and your health care team can do to lower your blood pressure to goal and keep it there. This dvd has lots of important and practical information on how to do just that.

2. You may have been surprised when your doctor told you that you have high blood pressure. Chances are, you feel pretty good and you don't have any symptoms. Unlike other serious medical conditions, you rarely have any symptoms of high blood pressure. For that reason, hypertension is often called the Silent Killer.

3. So how is your doctor sure you have it? Here's how. At least twice when you came to the medical office and had your blood pressure taken your readings were high. I'll explain in a minute what I mean by high readings. But let me start with an explanation of what a blood pressure reading is.

4. When a member of your health care team takes your blood pressure, they are checking two things. First, they're measuring the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart is beating. This is known as the systolic or the top number in a blood pressure reading.

5. Second, they measure the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart is resting between beats. This is called the diastolic, or bottom number. These two numbers make up your blood pressure reading.

6. Here is what these numbers *should* be – less than 120 over 80 is considered normal. High readings are when the top number is 140 or higher and the bottom number is 90 or higher. Now, if you have diabetes, kidney disease or certain other health conditions those numbers need to be even lower. With those health conditions you have high blood pressure if your reading is 130 or higher on the top number or 80 or higher on the bottom number.

7. Readings that fall between those two ranges are called pre-hypertension. If you are in this range some changes to your diet and exercise routine might be all you need to get your blood pressure down to normal. Your health care team can tell you what your personal blood pressure should be. This is known as your blood pressure goal. Knowing your goal is very important.

8. By the way, you don't have to wait until you see your doctor to check your blood pressure. You can check it yourself at home with a home blood pressure machine. We recommend an upper arm monitor. You can buy one of these at any of the Kaiser Permanente pharmacies. Make sure you check out the section of this dvd called Taking Your Blood Pressure at Home. There you'll find an easy lesson on how to take your own blood pressure.

9. As I said earlier high blood pressure is the leading cause of heart attack and stroke. So how can high blood pressure cause that? To put it simply, when your blood pressure is high, it makes your heart work harder and puts stress on your blood vessels.

10. People who have high blood pressure and have not taken steps - like the ones we talk about in this video - to control it - are 7 times more likely to have a stroke and 6 times more likely to have a heart attack.

11. And it's not just the blood vessels in your brain and heart that are affected. Blood vessels in your kidneys that are stressed by high blood pressure can lead to kidney failure. Stressed blood vessels in your eyes can cause blindness. I'm telling you these things so that you

understand that uncontrolled high blood pressure can cause many problems. I know you want to do everything you can to make sure none of that happens to you.

*12. Member Testimonial*

" Well when I was first diagnosed with hypertension I was not particularly concerned. I really didn't believe I had high blood pressure. So I told my doctor that I couldn't believe that I had high blood pressure. I felt fine! There was nothing wrong with me. But my doctor convinced me that I better try the medication. So I did. I went on the medication and I took it exactly as I was told to do. And when I went back in, my blood pressure had gone down. After a few times of that I was convinced. My doctor was right. I did have hypertension."

13. That is a very common reaction. And it's true that often you feel fine! Earlier I said that high blood pressure is called the Silent Killer. Because of the lack of symptoms it can be very frustrating to be told that you have to make some changes to what you eat or how much you exercise. Changes you hadn't planned on.

14. When people start to understand how serious it is, they often wonder..., why do you I have to have high blood pressure? That's a good question and the answer is...it's a combination of things.

15 Here's what we know. High blood pressure affects men and women at about the same rate but starts at different ages. Men tend to develop it around 40 to 50 years old. It usually shows up in women later, after menopause, so around the age of 55. Overall, 1 out of 3 Americans will develop high blood pressure over their lifetime.

16. Here's another risk factor. If someone in your immediate family - like your parents or a brother or sister - has high blood pressure there is a strong chance you will develop it too. It tends to 'run in the family'.

17. While you can't control the fact that is might run in your family there are many other things that can cause high blood pressure that you can control. And Kaiser Permanente is committed to giving you help every step of the way.

18. So what can you do to control your blood pressure? Let's start with your weight – extra pounds on your body puts extra stress on

your heart.

Kaiser Permanente has classes and other resources to help you lose weight. You get a lot of information and support in these.

19. Here's another risk factor you can control. Drinking too much alcohol. This is what is considered okay - one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men. Here is how a 'drink' is defined. It's either one glass of wine, or one beer or one ounce of hard alcohol.

20. The sections on this dvd called 'Healthy and Active Living' and 'Please DON'T Pass the Salt' are full of helpful information and guidance on other things you can do to lower your blood pressure. Make sure you watch them.

21. Finally, I want to mention the role a person's race plays in developing hypertension. African Americans are at the highest risk of any race to develop high blood pressure and tend to get it at a much younger age, usually in the early 30's.

22. No matter what your risk factors are, at Kaiser Permanente we are committed to helping you find the right balance of medication, exercise and healthy eating to get and keep your blood pressure at your goal.

### Chapter 3 - Healthy and Active Living

How's this for a health goal? Have fun on a daily basis. That's what this section is all about. Moving your body! Maybe you haven't thought that daily physical activity can be fun but if you pick the right activity for you – not only will you be doing something healthy for your body – I bet you'll find that you're having fun too. Hello, I'm Deborah Brown and I represent the Prevention Department at Kaiser Permanente.

Physical activity will help lower blood pressure. And not only is it simply one of the best things you can do for yourself - It makes you feel good!

Are you wondering how to get started? Well here's a great resource for activity ideas. Every quarter, as a Kaiser Permanente member you receive our magazine. Not only does it have great articles on nutrition and other health topics, it lists all the healthy living classes offered by Kaiser Permanente. You'll

find a variety of classes that can guide you on low impact work out techniques.

Once you get started you might wonder just how hard and how long you should exercise. For the answer to how hard, try this test. If you can do the activity, say, for instance, walking, and throughout your walk you are able to have a conversation with someone, that's good. That's just the right effort. This is called moderately intense exercise. But if you can sing...your not working hard enough...pick up the pace!

Doctors recommend that we do moderately intense physical activity at least 30 minutes most days of the week. Oh, I can hear you now – “But I don't have thirty minutes to exercise... I barely have any time for anything!” Well I'm going to show you in a little bit how you can find those thirty minutes.

But before you start on a new work out routine, check with your health care team.

For most people, moderate physical activity is safe if they start slowly and build up gradually. Listen to your body. If you ever have chest pain, shortness of breath or dizziness...stop and get help.

Not only can it be tough to make the time to exercise, I'm sure 'the voice in your head' is grumbling that maybe you don't have the right clothes or equipment and you don't want to get sweaty. Or don't want to mess up your hair.

Well then, start with the easiest and least expensive way to get moving. Quick walking! Put on some comfortable shoes and walk.

Studies show that people who exercise in the morning tend to get better results and tend to keep at it. So, if you have a dog how about taking it for a quick morning walk instead of just opening the back door and let it out in the yard. You'll both feel better. Or buddy up – make plans with your neighbor or spouse to walk first thing.

But if you can't exercise first thing in the morning- do it when you can. *That* you exercise matters more than *when* you exercise! Here's another great resource for you. At our website [www.kp.org](http://www.kp.org) you can go to the Health and Wellness tab, then click 'Healthy Living to Go'. There you'll find lots of good information on physical activity. Here you can download our 'Walking for Health' audio podcast and listen to it while you walk.

Remember how I said you should get 30 minutes of exercise most days? Well you can break it up...try 3- 10 minute walking breaks at work...instead of that expensive latte break. Walk outside, encourage a co-worker to join you. If you schedule daily walks with others that helps keep you committed.

At Kaiser Permanente we believe that just simple daily activities can be part of your exercise routine. Remember I told you I would find those thirty minutes? Here's another way to get a little bit more walking in as you do the things you normally do anyway.

Park your car far away from the office door or the movie theatre. Or take the stairs instead of the elevator. What about the mailbox? How many of us drive to our mailbox? Park your car at home and walk back to the mailbox. That's a better idea. These are simple choices that you can make everyday that will keep you moving. See, I told you. It all adds up.

(Members testimonials)

"I had to make some changes in my lifestyle because I was rather sedentary. And so I started thinking about little things – walking the dog, twice a day instead of once a day."

"I didn't like to exercise. I didn't you know? I just didn't. Exercise is very boring. But get someone to work with you, get someone to walk with you. You know, go walking. You can go walking early in the morning before you go to work, late in the evening when you get off."

"Joining a gym was really kind of a difficult process for me. I was not excited about it, hadn't really ever done it before, but a friend helped. I mean it does help a great deal to go with a friend, and sweat with a friend, talk with a friend."

"And if you have a stationary bike, get on it, thirty minutes a day on that bike or any other kind of exercise that you can do, you know do it for thirty minutes."

"The gym is still not my favorite place to go. But I know that it is good for me and I know that I feel good after I have done it. The stretching at the end is really – that feels good! It does feel good. So it's worth it to me to keep going."

Believe me I know how hard it can be to make the time commitment for exercise. When I made up my mind to exercise more I decided the best thing for me was to join an athletic club. There I found classes that gave me the

support I needed.

Working out in a group environment, like a fitness center, is inspiring and you meet all sorts of people of all ages keeping themselves healthy and strong. And don't worry about getting fancy exercise clothes. Just dress comfortably. Put on loose fitting pants or shorts, a t-shirt, gym shoes and you're all set. Consider getting a family membership so everyone can get active together. Instead of going to a movie as a family – go to the gym! Check out the local park district. They often have adult basketball or soccer leagues. That's a great way to meet new people and have some fun.

But if you prefer to stay home, you can still get a great work out. You can buy all sorts of dvds that will guide you through many types of workouts. And it's all in the privacy of your own home.

Let's see - Biking, swimming, basketball, yoga, tai chi, golf, soccer, dance classes, volleyball. Pick the one that's fun for you and like they say, "just do it!" But no matter what you pick make sure you always warm up a few minutes before and cool down slowly each time. Stretch and relax.

You know sometimes we find it difficult to start or maintain an exercise program due to the stress in our lives. You might be feeling that it's just too overwhelming to make the effort. If this is how you feel, your doctor wants to know. He or she can help you sort things out. At Kaiser Permanente we are here to help you succeed.

As we strive to make changes like exercising more and eating better we have to be realistic.

People who are successful at making positive changes in their lives start by having a plan. That means they set goals for themselves, reachable goals. So start small, start slow and be specific. Then keep track of your progress. Once you reach your first goals - celebrate – and then make new ones! You're already successful and there's always room for improvement. And remember, have fun! Those are doctor's orders.

## Chapter 4



1. What if I told you that one of the ways you can help lower your blood pressure is by eating more... I bet that got your attention! And it is true! But the trick is knowing which kinds of foods to eat more of. And of course, which foods to eat less of. Hello, I'm Deborah Brown and I represent the Kaiser Permanente Prevention Department. Nutrition experts have created what they call the DASH eating plan. This way of eating, along with exercising and taking your medications, has been proven to help lower blood pressure. DASH stands for "Dietary Approaches to Stopping Hypertension". That's a long name for a very simple approach which says eat **more** fruits and vegetables AND eat **less** fat and salt.

2. Okay, you know that a lot of fat in your diet is not good for you but you might be wondering why is salt the bad guy? Here's why. It makes your body hold extra water. This extra water stresses your heart and causes your blood pressure to rise. And as we've said many times in this video high blood pressure that is not controlled is the leading cause of heart attack and stroke.

3. Eating is a very important and very enjoyable part of our daily lives. We certainly don't expect you to totally give up foods you like. Just be sensible and cut back on foods like ice cream, fried chicken, double cheeseburgers and salty tortilla chips.

4. You know, it's easier to cut your salt use than you might think. If you're like most of us, you may not even realize how much salt you actually eat every day. And you might be surprised to know that almost 80% of the salt we eat comes from packaged and restaurant food. So there's two obvious places to look to start reducing your salt intake.

So just how much salt is okay? Well, in one day we shouldn't have more than a teaspoon of salt. A teaspoon doesn't sound like much but it is. Another word for table salt is sodium and I'll be using both words throughout this section. One teaspoon of salt is about 2300 milligrams of sodium.

6. Learning how much salt is in your food might be very eye-opening for you. I know I was amazed and alarmed when I started paying attention to it!

7. Here's a pop quiz. What has more salt in it...the big hamburger from a very popular fast food restaurant or the very large order of fries you order with it? If you said the French fries...you're wrong! They have 340 mgs of sodium. The hamburger, however, has 1050 mgs of sodium.

8. Surprising isn't it? Those two together have 1390 mgs of sodium. That's almost 2/3rds of your recommended daily amount in one meal!

If you think that's bad, here's another example. Say you go to a restaurant and enjoy a fajita chicken and steak combo with rice. Well, guess what. That has about 3800 milligrams of sodium. Wow! You just ate more than a day and a half's worth of salt...in one meal.

It's astounding how much sodium is in some restaurant food. Not to mention the fat and calories! Now, I'm not telling you to never eat out...I'm just reminding you to be smart about what and how often you eat at restaurants.

8a. In fact, did you know you can go online and find sodium content and other nutrition information for most of the fast food restaurants? That will really help help you make good choices.

9. Now let's look at some 'typical' foods you might eat at home and their sodium content. On packaged foods the sodium amount is always listed on what is called the nutrition facts label.

10. Here's a can of chicken noodle soup. Per serving it has 890 mg of sodium. And as it clearly says, that is 37 % of your daily recommended amount of sodium! From one little cup of soup! That doesn't leave much more room for salt in your food for the rest of the day, does it?

11. Just switching to a chicken noodle soup that is labeled 'low sodium' will reduce the salt by almost half.

12. That's just one example. How about this can of green beans. One serving which would be half a cup has 400 mgs of sodium. That's a lot! Remember, you should not have more than 2,300 milligrams total in a day. And less than that is even better. So what do you do?

13. Well, here's one tip. Frozen vegetables have no added salt. So try to use frozen veggies instead of canned. Or if you only have canned vegetables, rinse them off under water. This helps get rid of most of the added salt. Once you start reading your food labels you'll quickly see that packaged or processed food has a lot of sodium in it.

14. Maybe you thought that having one of those 'lean frozen' meals for lunch was a good way to watch your weight. Well, check out the amount of sodium in this one. It might be low in calories but it's not looking like such a good choice anymore, given its high salt content, is it?

15. I know it's not easy to make big changes to what you eat. Start by cutting back on high sodium foods and then begin adding more healthy foods.

16. You may be surprised to find out that some foods that you thought were really healthy actually have a large amount of salt in them. Yes, they may be low fat but not necessarily low sodium. For instance, low fat cottage cheese has 115 mgs of sodium an ounce! So 1/2 cup of low fat cottage cheese has 460 mgs of salt. That's quite a bit of salt in a little serving!

16a. We've all heard that a well rounded healthy diet is absolutely essential for good health. But what exactly does that really mean besides eating less salt and how do you do it?

*(17. Member Testimonials)*

"When I go to the grocery store these days my shopping has changed dramatically. I now am reading the labels and when they have high salt content those are the ones I do not select "

"I started eating more vegetables, green vegetables. I started eating more fruits. I started to eat less than what I was eating. In other words I strayed away from that table."

"Instead of using salt on a regular basis I will choose pepper. And that does liven up almost anything. I also have tried lemon juice and that does well. And certainly a salsa. But you have to read the labels on a salsa because some of those processed salsas have a higher salt content. But, if I am going to choose between a stroke or the salt it will be no salt for sure."

"I found another way of cooking my food. You know you can bake food and spice it up and it can taste just as good. But I wanted to do whatever it takes to control this high blood pressure."

"I'm also doing things like sharing meals with my husband when we go out to dinner. Instead of eating the whole meal because that helps both of us."

"I started off slow. I started off using a salt substitute. Then I started using different spices."

When I do go to a fast food restaurant - because we are going to meet friends there or something – I finally decided that a salad is the best choice.”

19. Remember, you don't have to take drastic measures and change everything about your eating. Make small changes. Eat less foods that are high in salt, sugar and fat and eat more foods high in fiber and low in fat. Keep it simple.

20. Now let's talk about food portions or in other words what is a serving size? The food label tells you what the serving size is on packaged foods. And they're usually smaller than you might guess! But what is the right portion size of other foods?

21. Here are some good examples of portion sizes. Meat, fish or poultry servings should be about 3 ounces. That's about the size of a deck of cards. The amount in a serving of raw vegetables is one cup. And for a fruit serving think about the size of a tennis ball. Now, you've probably noticed that restaurant servings tend to be huge. So consider sharing an entrée or eating half and taking the rest home.

23. We've all heard this. Fruits and vegetables are good for us. And getting the recommended nine servings a day can be tough. But sometimes the hardest part is just figuring out how to do it.

24. My advice is to start small. How about adding some blueberries to your morning yogurt or some raisins to your cereal?

25. Or everyone likes milkshakes! Put a banana and those blueberries in a blender with some 1% low fat milk and you have a healthy breakfast to drink on the run.

26. Keep apples handy for an afternoon snack. Those little boxes of raisins are convenient and healthy also. One of the keys to success with it is make it easy to eat well by having healthy choices available. You can't start eating healthier if you don't have the food in your home. Start adding more fruits and vegetables to your grocery shopping list.

27. Here are some more ideas. Put some raw carrots and red peppers in your lunch bag. Steam some broccoli for dinner and add the leftovers to the next day's spaghetti sauce. See, these are not big changes but they get the job done.

29. It can be challenging to make those healthy diet changes. But did you know that Kaiser Permanente has a great resource to support you? If you feel you want more help consider making an appointment with one of our registered dietitians. These nutrition professionals will work with you to

determine your best solution for healthy eating. That might be all it takes to give you the knowledge and the confidence to make healthier food choices.

## Chapter 5

### Chapter 5 Hypertension Medications: A Good Drug Habit

1. We mentioned in the introduction on this dvd that high blood pressure causes around 100,000 deaths each year. Those people might not have even known they had high blood pressure. Unlike you, they might not have been seen by a doctor. Hello, I'm Steven St. James and I represent the Kaiser Permanente Prevention Department. One of the most important ways to treat and control high blood pressure is with medications. In fact, we know that even with healthy eating and exercise, most people with high blood pressure end up needing to take medications. So if this happens to you it is not because you failed but because you need a little more help.
2. In this section you'll learn about the drugs your doctor can give you. These drugs, when taken as prescribed along with physical activity and eating well - will help you get and keep your blood pressure at your goal. For most people with high blood pressure their goal should be below 140 on the top number and below 90 on the bottom number- This section will also give you some great tips to help you make taking your hypertension drugs a habit...a good drug habit!

3. Now, if you're like me chemistry wasn't exactly your best subject in high school. You might feel that what Jairo Ramirez, a Clinical Pharmacist at Kaiser Permanente is about to explain to us is "a bit technical". But he'll be brief and it really is important that you have some understanding about what your medications are and more importantly *why* your doctor ordered them for you.

4. When it comes to lowering high blood pressure, we are lucky to have so many drug options. We often use a combination of these drugs to determine what works best for you. So don't be surprised if your doctor orders more than one blood pressure drug. For some people we know it can take 2 to 3 medications to get their blood pressure at their goal. That's because our bodies all respond a little differently to these drugs, so your doctor will have to see how your body responds. We also know that often high blood pressure needs more medication over time. We'll try different combinations to find the best one for you. So here are the four basic types of drugs used to control blood pressure. And, yes, I'll be brief!

5. The first type of hypertension drug is known as a diuretic or a water pill. Diuretics are the most common medications prescribed for hypertension. They

work by removing extra water from our bodies.
6. The next group has a very long name. They are the angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors. We call them ACE inhibitors for short. These drugs relax your body's arteries so your heart can beat easier.
7. The third group, that's the beta blockers. These medications lower both the force and the amount of times in a minute that your heart pumps. When your heart does not pump as hard the blood pressure is lower.
8. Finally there are the calcium channel blockers. I know another unusual name.. They act by relaxing the blood vessels so that the pressure in the blood vessels is lower.
9. I hope this 'brief' explanation showed you that each of these drugs works on different parts of your heart and blood vessels. This is why a combination of them will often turn out to be the best medication for you. Your Kaiser Permanente health care team will work <i>with</i> you to find what works best <i>for</i> you.
<p><i>10. Member testimonial</i></p> <p>"My doctor told me that as long as I have high blood pressure that I will be on this medicine. So I had to get used to that. That was something hard for me because I wasn't used to taking medication. I call it 'keep me alive' medicine..I say "Let me take my keep me alive medicine." This is one disease that you can control, you can control this disease. And the side effects, if you have any kind of side effects, please let your doctor know."</p>
11. Now, your doctor has prescribed the best medicines possible but they won't do you any good - if you don't take them. And it isn't always easy or convenient to take your medication as prescribed.
12. Our busy lives have a habit of getting in the way. I know I have a hard time just remembering to take my vitamins, let alone 2 or 3 high blood pressure pills!
13. So here are some helpful tips. Keep it simple. Take your pills at the same time every day. If you tie it to something else you do daily, like brushing your teeth...that helps you remember.
14. We've all had this experience. You think you took your dose today...but you're not entirely sure, you don't really remember...That's why pill boxes were invented! You can buy a seven – day pill box at any Kaiser Permanente pharmacy and they're only about two dollars. It's an easy way to keep track of what medications to take and if you've taken them.
15. Now, if you realize that you forgot to take your medications earlier go ahead and take them when you remember. However, if it doesn't occur to you that you

forgot until it is time to take them again just take your current dose. Do not double up.

16. If you find yourself frequently forgetting to take your drugs, set an alarm on your watch or your computer.

Every little reminder helps.

17. Now while most people can take these medications without bothersome side effects, sometimes side effects do occur. Take a look at the drug information that comes with your medication to learn more about your medicines. And please call your health care team if you have any questions about how your medications are affecting you.

18. Finally, if you do have concerns, it is very important that you do not suddenly stop your medication. With some of these drugs, suddenly stopping them can make your blood pressure shoot way up very quickly. So please, don't ever hesitate to call us with any concerns or questions.

## Chapter 6

1. Have you ever seen one of these?

It's a home blood pressure monitor. You use it to check your own blood pressure. Hi, I'm Steven St. James and I represent the Population and Prevention Department at Kaiser Permanente. We strongly encourage everyone who has hypertension to monitor it at home. Home monitoring really helps you get your blood pressure to goal and keep it there.

2. Checking your blood pressure at home is easy, very convenient and can save you both time and money. People who check their blood pressure at home usually need fewer office blood pressure appointments. But we do recommend that you see your doctor at least once a year. In a few minutes, I'll show you exactly how to use one.

3. You can buy a home monitor at any Kaiser Permanente pharmacy. Our pharmacists can help you choose a monitor and more importantly they'll check to make sure that the cuff fits your arm. This is important because one size does **not** fit all. If the cuff is too small or too large for you it can give incorrect blood pressure readings.

4. While there are several different types of home blood pressure monitors

available, at Kaiser Permanente we only recommend using the upper arm monitors. They're available in both manual and electronic models. Most people find the electronic ones are easier to use. Wrist or finger blood pressure monitors are simply not accurate.

5. After you've purchased a home blood pressure monitor, we'd like you to bring it to your next doctor or blood pressure check appointment. We'll make sure you're using your home monitor correctly. And we'll check accuracy by comparing its reading to our office monitor.

6. Check the manual to see how often the batteries need to be replaced. Usually it is every 6 months. So remind yourself by putting a piece of tape on the back of the monitor with the date that you need to replace your batteries.

I mention this because if you don't keep the batteries fresh your machine will not give accurate readings. In fact, if you start getting unusually high or low readings, first try changing your batteries and re-take your blood pressure. But if your blood pressure readings remain unusually high or low, please notify your healthcare team.

7. Let's get down to the details of how to use your new monitor. It is very important to do it correctly.

Start by sitting comfortably with your back supported and your feet flat on the floor. Be sure to sit like this for five minutes. Maybe have a book or a magazine handy that you can look at while you wait. You want to be sure you're good and relaxed. Then take the cuff and wrap it smoothly but snugly around the upper part of your **bare** arm. Generally, it doesn't matter which arm you use and you can use the same arm each time. But women/men who have had breast surgery, talk with your health care team about which arm to use.

8. Make sure that the bottom edge of the cuff is 1 inch above the crease of your elbow.

9. Then rest your arm on a table so that your upper arm is at heart level, like this, with your palm up.

10. I'll explain first how to use a manually operated monitor. Now that your cuff is on, close the valve. Pump your cuff 20 to 30 points above your usual top number. For example, if your normal blood pressure is 130 over 70, you would pump it up to about 150.

11. Then slowly release the valve letting the air out of the cuff ... It should take



about 20-30 seconds to let the air completely out.

12. If you have an electronic monitor, once the cuff is on your arm just press the start button. But no matter which type of monitor you use, sit still and **don't talk** during the actual measurement. When you're finished jot down your reading, then wait one to two minutes and check it again. The reason we suggest you take two readings each time is because the second reading is often lower. That's because you're probably a little more relaxed.

13. It's important to record all your readings. Don't ignore some just because they are higher or lower.

14. Your blood pressure will not be exactly the same every time but the numbers should be fairly close. For instance, you might take your blood pressure and say it's 140/88 and then it's 136/92. This is a normal difference. However, if you take your BP and it is 136/92 and then the next reading is 182/100, this is a big difference. This can be cause for concern and you should notify your health care team.

15. Now that you know 'how' to check your blood pressure, let's talk about 'when' to check it. We recommend you check it at least 3 days a week in the morning, between 6 and 10 a.m. or within an hour of waking up. AND also check it at least 3 evenings a week, between 6 and 10 p.m. You can do the morning and evening readings on the same day or separate days.

15a. It is important though to take your morning blood pressure reading *before* eating, exercising or taking your blood pressure medications. If you need something to drink, drink only water until your blood pressure has been taken. These instructions apply only to the morning reading. It doesn't matter when you eat or take your medications for the evening reading. And don't forget to check your blood pressure two times at each sitting.

16. You'll be happy to know that once your blood pressure is at goal, you really only need to take it twice a month just to make sure you're still at goal. The last step is to let your health care team know what your home readings are. There are many convenient ways to do this. You can log on to [www.kp.org](http://www.kp.org) and e-mail your doctor your information. Or you can call, fax or drop them off at your medical office. However you do it, remember to always include your Kaiser Permanente ID number on the information.

17. By choosing to monitor your blood pressure at home you've made a real commitment to yourself and to your health. Along with taking your medications, exercising and watching what you eat you are doing everything you can do to stay healthy. Congratulations and keep up the good work!