

**BLOOD PRESSURE AND RADIAL PULSE****TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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## BLOOD PRESSURE AND RADIAL PULSE

### 1. Background and rationale

Blood pressure and radial pulse measurements will be recorded to document blood pressure and radial pulse. In addition, individuals with extremely high levels of blood pressure will be excluded from the isokinetic strength, pulmonary function, and long distance corridor walk tests and referred for medical care according to the protocol for referrals. Participants with extremely high or low radial pulse will be excluded from the long distance corridor walk test.

### 2. Equipment and supplies

- conventional mercury sphygmomanometer.
- blood pressure cuffs (small, regular, large and thigh cuffs).
- stethoscope: standard stethoscope and ear pieces with bell, tubing to be maximum of 14 inches long.
- double-headed stethoscope (for training only)
- tape measure
- eyebrow pencil
- chair with back support
- digital stop-watch

#### 2.1 Maintenance of blood pressure equipment

##### With Each Use:

- 1) Check the sphygmomanometer for correct zero. Place the instrument flat on the table and disconnect the inflation system. With eyes level with the zero line, assure the top of the meniscus is on the zero line.
- 2) Check the shape of the meniscus – it should be a smooth, well-defined curve.

##### Monthly:

- 1) Check that the mercury rises easily in the tubing and that the mercury column does not bounce noticeably when the valve is closed.
- 2) Check for cracks in the glass tube.
- 3) Check the cap at the top of the calibrated glass tube to make sure it is securely in place.

- 4) Check for spilled mercury in the manometer case.
- 5) Check the cuffs, pressure bulb, and manometer and stethoscope tubing for cracks or tears.
- 6) Check the pressure control valve for sticks or leaks.
- 7) Check the stethoscope diaphragm for cracks.
- 8) Make sure when you close the manometer case that:
  - the manometer tubing is connected and the thumb valve is closed
  - the manometer case is stored on its right side so that the mercury will flow back into the reservoir.
- 9) Never attempt to repair the equipment yourself. Send the instrument for repair if any of the above checks reveal a problem.
- 10) Check the sphygmomanometer for air leaks. Roll the cuff around a plastic bottle or tin can and secure in place. Close the valve on the Air-Flo system and inflate the instrument until the mercury rises to 240 mm Hg. Close the valve. The mercury column should remain stable. If the column continues to fall, there is an air leak and the system should be re-inflated until the column rises to 200 mmHg. Pinch the tubing at various locations to localize the area of the leak, then replace the leaking tubing, cuff, or valve.

**General:**

With time, the mercury will become dirty and an oxide layer will be deposited on the inside of the glass tube. Do not attempt to clean the glass column with a pipe cleaner, as hazardous levels of mercury aerosol will be produced. Have your QC supervisor send the instrument to your local supplier for repair.

Since mercury is a hazardous, toxic substance, all maintenance and proper disposal procedures must be performed carefully (consult your local institution for guidelines). Do not perform any maintenance procedures that will expose mercury to air. A manometer specialist with expertise in handling toxic substances should be contacted to add or withdraw mercury from the instrument.

Check the blood pressure cuffs on a monthly basis to assure all sizes of cuffs are available. Document the monthly checks of the sphygmomanometer on your Quality Assurance (QA) Equipment Log Form.

Inspect the tape used to measure arm circumference for damage or wear twice a year and record these checks on the QA Equipment Log Form.

### 3. Safety issues and exclusions

None.

### 4. Participant and exam room preparation

Participants should not drink any caffeine (from coffee, tea, or soda), should not eat or do any heavy physical activity, smoke, or ingest alcohol for 30 minutes prior to recording the blood pressure.

#### 4.1 Arm circumference

Refer to the Health ABC Data from Prior Visits Report to see which arm was used at the Baseline (Year 1) visit. If possible, use the same arm that was used at the Baseline visit (usually the right arm). If the participant's right arm is injured or missing, or if the participant has had a mastectomy on the right side, use the left arm for the arm circumference and blood pressure measurement. Measure the participant's arm to determine the appropriate cuff size before allowing the participant to rest.

Use the following procedures to measure the participant's arm and determine the appropriate cuff size:

- Proper measurement requires that the participant's arm is bare to the shoulder. The participant will be wearing a gown or loose-fitting top provided by the clinic.
- Request the participant to stand, bend the elbow, and put the forearm straight across the chest. The upper arm should be at a 90 degree angle to the lower arm.
- Measure arm length from the bony prominence of the shoulder girdle (acromion) to the tip of the elbow using a tape measure.
- Mark the midpoint on the dorsal (back) surface of the arm.
- Ask the participant to relax their arm along the side of the body.
- Draw the tape measure horizontally around the arm at the midpoint mark, but do not indent the skin.
- Use the measurement to determine the correct cuff size.

Do not use the markings on the blood pressure cuff for reference. Instead, use the following criteria for determining the appropriate cuff size for the participant:

| <u>Arm Circumference (cm/in.)</u> | <u>Cuff's Bladder Size (cm)*</u> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 16.0 - 22.5 cm (6.4 - 9.0 in)     | small cuff (9.0 cm)              |
| 22.6 - 30.0 cm (9.1 - 12.0 in)    | regular cuff (12.0 cm)           |
| 30.1 - 37.5 cm (12.1 - 15.0 in)   | large cuff (15.0 cm)             |
| 37.6 - 43.7 cm (15.1 - 17.5 in)   | thigh cuff (17.5 cm)             |

Keep the above chart of arm circumference measurements and corresponding cuff sizes readily available for easy reference.

## **5. Detailed measurement procedures**

In measuring the participant's blood pressure, the participant should rest for approximately five minutes with their feet flat on the floor and legs and ankles uncrossed. The maximum inflation level should be determined and one blood pressure reading obtained.

### **5.1 Application of the cuff**

- Ensure that the participant is seated comfortably in a chair with back supported and both feet are flat on the floor.
- Make sure that the participant's arm is resting on the table at a 90-degree angle with the palm facing up.
- Palpate the brachial artery.
- Mark the brachial artery with an eyebrow pencil.
- Place the appropriate-sized cuff around the upper right arm, approximately at heart level, with the participant's palm facing upward (the participant may rest their forearm and elbow on a table or arm of the chair). Place the lower edge of the cuff with its tubing connections about one inch above the natural crease across the inner aspect of the elbow.
- Wrap the cuff snugly about the arm, with the inflatable inner bladder centered over the area of the brachial artery. The brachial artery is usually found at the crease of the arm, slightly toward the body. Secure the wrapped cuff firmly by applying pressure to the locking fabric fastener over the area that it overlaps the cuff. You should be able to insert two fingers under the cuff.

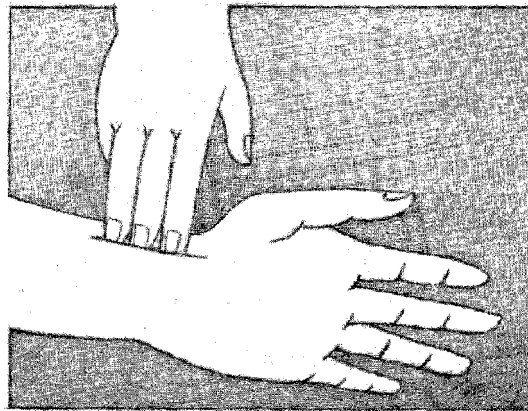
- If it is not feasible to measure blood pressure using the right arm, the left arm may be used. The change in arm and the reason for the change should be noted on the comments section of the form.

### 5.2 Rest period

For this examination year in Health ABC, the pressure can be measured after any period where the participant has been sitting quietly for 5 or more minutes. Record one blood pressure measurement. After the seated blood pressure measurement is recorded, the participant should be instructed to quietly stand for one minute before the standing blood pressure is measured.

### 5.3 Radial pulse

BE SURE TO WAIT UNTIL THE PARTICIPANT HAS BEEN RESTING FOR 5 MINUTES.



Have the participant turn their palm upward (see figure above). Palpate the radial pulse with your index and middle fingers. Use the stopwatch to count the pulse for 30 seconds and record the number of beats in 30 seconds as Measurement 1 on the Radial Pulse form; Count the pulse for 30 seconds again, and record the number of beats as Measurement 2. After completing the radial pulse measurement, add them to get the average number of beats per minute. Record this number on the Radial Pulse form, and on the Long Distance Corridor Walk Eligibility Assessment form in the Year 10 Clinic Visit Workbook). For information about the stopwatch, please see section 2.1 of the Long Distance Corridor Walk chapter.

## 5.4 Determining the Maximal Inflation Level (MIL)

### 5.4.1 Auscultatory gap

An auscultatory gap is the fading or disappearance of sound after the first Korotkoff sounds are heard. The sound then reappears at a level well above the diastolic pressure. The radial pulse can still be felt during the silent phase and the gap usually occurs between Phase I and II. This phenomenon is seen more frequently in older persons.

This means that in an adult with an auscultatory gap, the real systolic pressure may be missed and read as a much lower BP. For example:

Real systolic is 172 but sounds fade at:  
168 and reappear at  
152 and disappear at  
98.

If the correct procedure (inflating to MIL) for BP measurement is not used, this participant's BP may be read as 152/98 instead of 172/98. The only way to avoid this error is to obtain the MIL before BP measurement.

Determine the pressure to which to inflate the cuff for the measurement of the systolic blood pressure. This assures that the cuff pressure at the start of the reading exceeds the systolic blood pressure and allows you to hear the first Korotkoff sound. The procedures for determining maximal inflation level are as follows:

- Attach the cuff tubing to the conventional mercury sphygmomanometer.
- Palpate the radial pulse (if the radial pulse is difficult to palpate, the brachial pulse may be used).
- Inflate the cuff to 70 mmHg. Then increase by 10 mmHg increments until the radial pulse is no longer felt (palpated systolic).
- Deflate the cuff quickly and completely.
- Inflate the cuff to 30 mmHg above the palpated systolic pressure for all subsequent readings.
- Repeat the MIL if the first attempt was unsatisfactory or you have had to readjust the cuff after measuring the MIL. Wait 30 seconds before making a second attempt if the first is unsatisfactory. If the second attempt is unsatisfactory, terminate the procedure and note the problem on the form.
- If the radial pulse is still felt at a level of 270 mm Hg or higher (which means that the MIL is 30 mm Hg higher) repeat the MIL. If the MIL is still 300 mm Hg, terminate the

blood pressure measurements and write in “300/MIL” on the form. On the Report of Findings, indicate the blood pressure as 270 palpated, and refer the participant to see their doctor within the next week.

### 5.5 Performing the blood pressure measurement

- Place the ear pieces of the stethoscope, with the tips turned forward, into your ears.
- Apply the bell of the stethoscope over the brachial artery with light pressure, ensuring skin contact at all points. Effective use of the bell requires careful palpation of the brachial artery to know exactly where to place the bell. Place the bell just below, but not touching, the cuff or tubing.
- Close the thumb valve and squeeze the bulb, inflating the cuff at a rapid but smooth and continuous rate to the maximal inflation level. *Note:* Your eyes should be level with the mid-range of the manometer scale and focused on the level to which you will raise the pressure.
- Open the thumb valve very slightly and maintain a constant rate of deflation at no more than 2-3 mm per second, allowing the cuff to deflate. Listen throughout the entire range of deflation, from the maximum pressure past the systolic reading (the pressure where the first regular sound is heard) until 10 mmHg below the level of the diastolic reading (i.e., 10 mmHg below the level where you hear the last regular sound).

The systolic value (Phase I) is the pressure at which you hear the first of two or more knocking sounds in appropriate rhythm. The diastolic sound (Phase V) is the pressure at which you hear the last muffled sound.

- Deflate the cuff fully by separating the tubing and remove the stethoscope ear pieces.
- Record the systolic and diastolic values in the spaces provided on the form.
- Hold the participant’s arm vertically above their head for a full five seconds to relieve blood pooling.
- Have the participant stand quietly for one minute, then obtain one standing blood pressure measurement and record the systolic and diastolic values from this measurement on the Blood Pressure Form and on the Long Distance Corridor Walk Eligibility Assessment Form.



## 5.6 Criteria for systolic and diastolic blood pressure

To identify correctly systolic (Phase I) and diastolic (Phase V) Korotkoff values, listen carefully via the stethoscope while reading and interpreting the mercury column.

- The systolic value is the pressure level at which you hear the first of two or more knocking sounds in the appropriate rhythm. *Note:* A single sound heard in isolation (i.e., not in rhythmic sequence) before the first of the rhythmic sounds (systolic) does not alter the interpretation of blood pressure).
- The diastolic value can be identified as the pressure level at which you hear the last of these rhythmic sounds (usually muffled).
- Make the mercury column drop at 2 to 3 mmHg per second, from the maximum inflation pressure until 10 mmHg below that of the last regular sound heard. The control of the deflation rate at 2 to 3 mmHg per second is essential for accurate readings and depends on the handling of the bulb and its control valve.

## 5.7 Guidelines for blood pressure readings

- Record all readings to the nearest even digit, rounding up (i.e., read any value that appears to fall exactly between the markings on the mercury column to the next higher even marking).
- Make readings at the top of the meniscus, or rounded surface of the mercury columns.
- When the pressure is released too quickly from a high level, a vacuum is formed above the mercury and the meniscus is distorted. Allow a few moments for it to reappear before reading the manometer or doing a repeat measurement.
- Repeat the MIL whenever a systolic blood pressure reading is less than 10 mm mercury from the MIL, or if sounds are heard immediately.
- If a measurement was interrupted, use the following guidelines:
  1. Repeat the MIL only if the cuff was removed or more than five minutes has lapsed between the MIL and the first blood pressure reading or between any two blood pressure readings.
  2. Note on the form in the comments section that the measurement was repeated, and indicate why.
- If the blood pressure sounds are not heard during the first measurement, review your technique, check stethoscope position for loose connections or tubing kinks, and maintain

a quiet environment. Relocate the brachial pulse and apply the bell headpiece directly over the pulse point. Take care to wait at least 30 seconds between measurements. Use the procedure to enhance the sounds (see below) and measure the blood pressure a second time, placing the stethoscope in the same position. Note the use of the enhancement procedures in the comments section of the form.

### **5.8 Procedures to enhance the Korotkoff sounds**

If you are having difficulty hearing the blood pressure sounds, there are three methods that can be used to increase the intensity and loudness of the sounds.

1. Reduce room noise.
2. Instruct the participant to open and close their fist 8 to 10 times. Inflate the cuff and measure the BP immediately.
3. Have the participant raise their arm and forearm over their head and make a fist several times for at least 60 seconds. Inflate the cuff while the arm is still overhead, but the hand relaxed, to a level 50 mm Hg above the expected systolic level. Then lower the arm rapidly and measure the blood pressure in the usual manner.

### **6. Procedures for performing the measurements at home (if applicable)**

The same procedures described above may be performed at home.

### **7. Seated blood pressure alert values/Follow-up/Reporting to participants**

Below the participant's actual systolic and diastolic blood pressure results that will be written on the Participant Results Report are listed three main categories of blood pressure results:

|                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Normal:          | Less than 120/80 mm Hg |
| Prehypertension: | 120-139/80/89 mm Hg    |
| Hypertension:    | 140/90 mm Hg or higher |

Also, based on the Joint National Committee on Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure guidelines, there are five categories to check on the blood pressure portion of the Participant Results Report:

- If the participant's systolic blood pressure is normal, i.e., <120 systolic, and < 80 diastolic or prehypertension, 120-139 systolic, or 80-89 diastolic, check "Recheck blood pressure within 1 year" on the Participant Results Report.

- If the participant's systolic blood pressure is 140 to 159, or their diastolic blood pressure is 90-99, check the box on the Participant Results Report that says "Recheck blood pressure within 2 months." Suggest to the participant that they have their blood pressure rechecked within 2 months.
- If the participant's systolic blood pressure is 160 to 179, or their diastolic blood pressure is 100-109, check the box on the Participant Results Report that says "See your doctor in 1 month." Suggest to the participant that they see their doctor within one month.
- If the participant's systolic blood pressure is 180 to 209, or their diastolic blood pressure is 110-119, check the box on the Participant Results Report that says "See your doctor in 1 week." If the participant gives their permission, you can contact their primary care provider within one week, or instruct the participant to contact their primary care provider within one week.
- If the participant's systolic blood pressure is  $\geq 210$ , or their diastolic blood pressure is  $\geq 120$ , check the box on the Participant Results Report that says "See your doctor immediately." If the participant gives their permission, you can contact their primary care provider immediately, or instruct the participant to contact their primary care provider immediately.

Instruct the participant to talk with their doctor about any specific questions that they may have about their blood pressure.

## 8. Quality assurance

### 8.1 Training requirements

Clinical experience with blood pressure measurement is required. In addition, training should include:

- Read and study manual
- Attend Health ABC training session on techniques (or observe administration by experienced examiner)
- Practice on volunteers
- Compare measurements with those made by experienced colleagues (Goal: obtain measurements within  $\pm 2$  mm Hg of that observed by a trainer listening with a double-headed stethoscope.)
- Discuss problems and questions with local expert or QC officer

## 8.2 Certification requirements

- Complete training requirements
- Explain and demonstrate daily and monthly checks of sphygmomanometer
- Explain procedure if measurement is interrupted
- Explain procedure to enhance Korotkoff sounds
- Recite alert values
- Conduct exam on two volunteers while being observed by QC officer listening with double-headed stethoscope
- Performs exam according to protocol as demonstrated on completed QC checklist
- Three simultaneous readings of systolic and diastolic measurements recorded by the staff member agree with those of the QC officer within 4 mm Hg, with the average of the three readings within 3 mm Hg.
- Three sequential recordings of radial pulse measurement by the staff member agree with those of the QC officer within 3 beats per 30 second recording and with the average of the three readings within 2 beats.

## 8.3 Quality assurance checklist

### Radial Pulse

- Radial pulse palpated correctly
- First radial pulse correctly measured and recorded (30 seconds)
- Second radial pulse correctly measured and recorded (30 seconds)
- Radial pulse averaged correctly on form

### Blood Pressure

- Explains procedure
- Measures for cuff size
- Wraps cuff snugly, centering bladder over brachial artery
- Five minute rest period before measurements
- Palpates radial artery
- Determines maximal inflation level
- Inflates rapidly to maximal inflation level
- Places bell on brachial pulse
- Deflates cuff 2-3 mm Hg per second
- First and fifth phase correctly identified (verified with double stethoscope)
- Standing blood pressure measurement measured after one minute standing rest period
- Records reading and disconnects tubes

- Reviews forms for completeness
- Correctly completes forms
- Tells participant BP reading and refers as indicated
- Maintenance log up to date

#### **8.4 QC reports**


Monthly reports of the distribution of final digits for each technician will be reviewed by the QC Officer. Trends toward digit preference will be discussed with the technician without revealing which digit and retraining/recertification may be required.

#### **Acknowledgments:**

Women's Health Initiative Operations Manual. Volume 2, Section 9.2: Blood Pressure. 8/30/95.

WHAS Operations Manual. Section 3.5 Blood Pressure Measurements. 6/18/93.

9. Data collection form

|   |   |  |   |  |
|---|---|--|---|--|
|  | HABC Enrollment ID #  | Acrostic   | Type of Annual Contact  | Staff ID#  |
|   | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> | <input type="radio"/> Year 8 <input checked="" type="radio"/> Year 10 | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> |

**RADIAL PULSE**

Measurement 1    beats per 30 seconds

+

Measurement 2    beats per 30 seconds

---

=    beats per minute

*(Examiner Note: Record radial pulse (beats per minute) on Long Distance Corridor Walk Eligibility Assessment Form, page 64, Question #3.)*





|  |   |   |                           |
|--|---|---|---------------------------|
| HABC Enrollment ID #<br>[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ] | Acrostic<br>[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ] | Type of Annual Contact<br><input type="radio"/> Year 8 <input checked="" type="radio"/> Year 10 | Staff ID#<br>[ ][ ][ ][ ] |
|--|---|---|---------------------------|

**BLOOD PRESSURE**

1. Cuff Size                     Small     Regular     Large     Thigh

2. Arm Used                     Right     Left →  
(Examiner Note:  
Use arm listed on Data from Prior Visits Report.)

|   |
|---|
| Please explain why right arm was <u>not</u> used:<br>_____<br>_____ |
|---|

**Pulse Obliteration Level**

3. Palpated Systolic        [ ][ ][ ] mm Hg

**+ Add 30\***

\* Add +30 to Palpated Systolic to obtain Maximal Inflation Level.

4. Maximal Inflation Level (MIL)    [ ][ ][ ] † mm Hg

† If MIL is  $\geq 300$  mm Hg, repeat the MIL. If MIL is still  $\geq 300$  mm Hg, terminate blood pressure measurements.

5. Was blood pressure measurement terminated because MIL was  $\geq 300$  mmHg after second reading?  
 Yes                     No

**Blood Pressure (Seated)**

6. Systolic                    [ ][ ][ ] mm Hg

Comments (required for missing or unusual values):

7. Diastolic                    [ ][ ][ ] mm Hg

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

