

PX: Right, so now we're going to be discussing about the automatic blood pressure cuff. This is something that I use on a day-to-day fashion because it's relatively quick, and it's relatively accurate as well. However, be aware that you can't really use it because it will be inaccurate for someone who has atrial fibrillation, or if the cuff is not correct, or if it's not been recently calibrated.

So how do we take a blood pressure using this then? Well the first thing is to make sure that the patient has had at first a five to ten minute rest before they enter the room, the reason being is that if they huff and puff down the corridor, sit down, the blood pressure, heart rate and respiratory rate will normally be higher than if they weren't at home. Then the other thing to ask, is to keep their two feet flat on the floor. If they were not doing that then the heart rate and also blood pressure is normally higher. The other thing to mention, is the fact that the level of the arm with the cuff on has to be along the level of the heart itself, and nicely relaxed, not tensed, and to make sure any clothing is not tight or occluding, and to loosen things if needed.

So what sort of words do we use? Well let me try that with Mr Bloggs, and then we'll try that with a real patient. Mr Bloggs, I'm just going to be putting a blood pressure cuff on if that's okay. Have you had your blood pressure taken recently? Do you know what that entails? Let me demonstrate that for you. I'm going to put the blood pressure cuff on like so, just along the level of the heart. Have you had any recent coffee to drink? Anything like that? Or have you smoked recently? No? Okay, that's good to know. Once I've put the blood pressure cuff on, I'm going to attach it to the automatic blood pressure monitor, I'm going to palpate the radial artery, feel for the heart rate to see whether the pulse is regular or irregular.

The pulse is regular, so we can carry ahead with the automatic readings. I'm just going to then press a button whereby then the air will be pumped into the cuff and the cuff will inflate normally. Once the cuff inflates there will be an element of pressure that will be attached to the cuff itself before air is then released and then the reading is shown on the blood pressure machine. We normally take two to three readings at a time, and we take the lowest of all of the readings. The patient can easily get an automatic blood pressure machine at home and do this at home by themselves as well. Then we document all of these readings in the clinical records, and we thank the patient.

I will demonstrate all of this with a real patient next. Hi Jonathan.

J: Hi.

PX: Just to continue with our examination today. I just need to measure your blood pressure, if that's okay?

J: Yeah, that's absolutely fine.

PX: Have you had one done before in the past?

J: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

PX: Okay. I'll just explain a bit more just so you know what's happening as well. Which arm do you use, the left or the right arm?

J: Usually the left one that they do it on.

PX: Okay, that's fine. Is there any medical reason why they use the left and not the right?

J: No, not particularly. It's just always on the left.

PX: Then that's fine, then that's what we'll be using today. Just so that the results can be compared to your previous ones that you've had done. So let me just explain to you; we have an automatic blood pressure machine here which I'll just put on there. I'm just going to fit it on your left arm if that's okay.

J: Yeah, that's fine.

PX: So this will be relatively snug on your left arm. I'm just going to loosen up your t-shirt so that doesn't occlude any of this. The little wire will just dangle down in the middle of your elbow crease in the front, and nice and relaxed like so. I'm just going to press it and you'll feel the pressure going now.

J: Oh yeah.

PX: It may be tight and uncomfortable but please bear with it, it'll soon pass away very shortly. In the meantime, I'm just going to have a feel of your pulse on the other hand. And that's nice and regular, so that's very good. Perfect, excellent. So the results show that you have a blood pressure of 130/69. That's entirely normal. Let me just take that off you, and that's perfect. Thank you very much.

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