

The Thalidomide Trust

Information for beneficiaries

Taking blood pressure in the leg at home

You may need to keep a check on your blood pressure at home regularly or just for a short time before seeing your doctor. Ideally blood pressure should be measured in the arm but it can also be taken in the leg. There is currently no blood pressure device for the leg that is validated by the British Hypertension Society.

This how to take a blood pressure in the leg;

- It is best to measure your blood pressure in the same way, using the same size cuff as your doctor so that measurements can be easily compared.
- The blood pressure in your leg is different to the pressure in your arm, but will still give an indication of whether your blood pressure is normal or raised. Your doctor will be able to interpret the readings for you.
- Blood pressure monitors are available to buy in pharmacies and online, but be sure to buy a clinically validated monitor and the correct cuff size for the area it is to be used on. Information about this can be found at www.bloodpressureuk.org or www.bhsoc.org/index.php?cID=246 However average sizes are a large cuff for a thigh, and a normal or small cuff for the calf and ankle are:

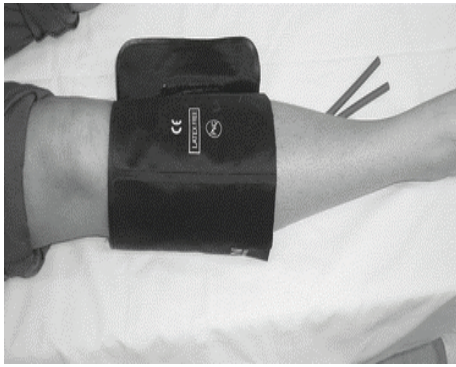
18-22cm small cuff

22-32cm standard cuff

32-45cm large cuff

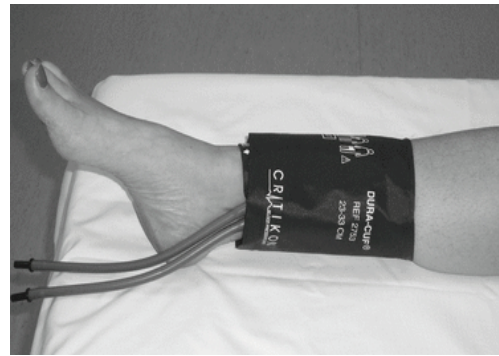
If a larger size is needed then contact the company supplying your blood pressure device.

- Always measure your blood pressure at the same site (thigh, calf or ankle) and at the same time of day. Do it at least once, and preferably twice, each day and keep a record. (Ideally this is for 7 days before you go to your GP)
- Many things can make your blood pressure rise for a short time, so before you take it make sure you do not need to use the toilet, that you have not just eaten a big meal and that it is not within 30 minutes of drinking caffeine or smoking. Wear loose-fitting clothes.
- Apply the blood pressure cuff around your thigh, calf or ankle on the part that is correct for the cuff. It does not matter which leg you use but continue to use the same one; using the ankle maybe less painful than the calf.



Cuff placement on calf or thigh

For the calf and thigh, the cuff is placed with the middle of the inflatable part (called the mid-bladder) at the back.



Cuff Placement on the ankle

For the ankle, the cuff is placed as far down the leg as possible with the mid-bladder just behind the inner part of the ankle.

- Ensure your leg is slightly raised by placing it on a pillow or cushion so that the cuff will be at approximately the same level as your heart.
- Lie back and relax for a few moments with your head also on a pillow before switching on your automatic blood pressure monitor.
- When you are taking your reading, keep still and silent. Moving and talking can affect your reading.
- Take three readings about two minutes apart. Discard the first reading and average out the other two - add them together and divide by 2
- Adjust the reading – if you wish to get an idea of what the blood pressure in your arm would be take 10 off the top reading and add 5 to the bottom reading. A reading taken at home in the arm is expected to be lower than 135/85 be considered normal.
- Record your reading, either in the memory of your monitor, on a computer or on paper.
- If in doubt, talk to your doctor

Additional Information

- **Medication** - Some people affected by thalidomide are concerned drugs affect them more than other people. This is not normally the case. However, if you are concerned how medicine taken to lower blood pressure may affect you, then discuss your concerns with your doctor. You might agree to start with a lower dose of the drug to begin with. This will be better than not taking it at all.
- **Difficulty having blood taken** - If it is not easy to have a sample of blood taken, it may make it more difficult to assess your cardiovascular risk or how well drugs the doctor gives you are working. Certain medications do not need regular blood tests so talk to your doctor about this.

For further information contact the Thalidomide Trust's HealthLink line on 01455290343

References:

Moore, C., Dobson, A., Kinagi, M. and Dillon, B. (2008), Comparison of blood pressure measured at the arm, ankle and calf. *Anaesthesia*, 63: 1327–1331. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2044.2008.05633.x