



The Importance of the Second Blood Pressure Reading

A simple best practice to save time and improve patient outcomes

Taking a second blood pressure reading is one of the easiest and most effective ways to improve accuracy, reduce misdiagnosis, and support better care decisions. It ensures reliable readings for diagnosing and managing hypertension — and can help close a HEDIS® Controlling Blood Pressure measure.

Why the Second Reading Matters

Greater accuracy and fewer misdiagnoses

A single reading often doesn't reflect a patient's true blood pressure. Averaging two readings — or using the lowest systolic and diastolic values — gives a more accurate result. This helps avoid false elevations due to white coat syndrome or patient stress.

Avoid overtreatment

A repeat reading can prevent unnecessary hypertension diagnoses and medication adjustments, sparing patients side effects and extra costs.

Better treatment decisions and outcomes

Accurate blood pressure data leads to better care planning — whether that means medication changes or lifestyle counseling. Multiple readings improve cardiovascular risk prediction and ensure patients get the right level of intervention.

Alignment with best practices

The American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology recommend taking at least two readings, separated by one minute, after a period of rest. Repeat any reading $\geq 140/90$ mm Hg to confirm results and standardize care.

Addressing Common Concerns



Time

While a second reading adds a minute or two to the exam, it reduces time lost to follow-ups for inaccurate results. Integrating the second check into workflow — such as while the patient is being counseled or entered in the electronic medical record — can make it seamless.



Training

Ensure staff follow proper techniques: correct cuff size, patient positioning, and rest intervals. Elevated readings ($\geq 140/90$ mm Hg) should be confirmed manually by the physician for accuracy.

Bottom Line

Taking a second blood pressure reading is quick, evidence-based, and pays off in accuracy, quality scores, and patient outcomes.

Questions?

Please contact us at quality_providerengagement@emblemhealth.com.