**Taking Vital Signs**

1. Write down the date, time, and your patient’s name.
2. Ask them how they’re feeling today, if they’ve been ill recently, or have a history of blood pressure issues.
3. Clean the earpieces of the stethoscope with alcohol.
4. Check for proper blood pressure cuff fit – the bladder of the cuff (the inflatable portion) should cover 80% of the patient’s arm circumference. If the cuff is too small, you will get a reading that is higher than what is actually is. If the cuff is too large, you will get a reading that is lower.
5. Patient should be sitting and relaxed, legs uncrossed, not talking or moving during the procedure. Arm should be resting at heart level.
6. Find the patient’s brachial pulse. This is located in the elbow crease (antecubital space) towards the inner side of the arm. This is where you line up the arrows on the cuff and where you will place the diaphragm of the stethoscope.
7. Now find the patient’s radial pulse. This is located on the wrist along the thumb side.
8. Keeping your fingers on the radial pulse (do not use your thumb), tighten the screw by turning it clockwise and inflate the cuff until you no longer feel the pulse. Note what the reading is on the BP cuff and add 30 to it.
9. Deflate the cuff by turning the screw counterclockwise and wait at least 30 seconds.
10. Place the stethoscope in your ears and place the diaphragm over the brachial artery. Hold it gently but firmly in place as you inflate the cuff.
11. Inflate the cuff to the number you got in Step #5.
12. Slowly turn the screw counterclockwise to release the air in the cuff gradually.
13. As soon as you hear the sound of the pulse, make a mental note of this number. This is the top number or the *systolic pressure*.
14. Continue slowly deflating the cuff until you can no longer hear the pulse. Once you can no longer hear the pulse, make a mental note of this number. This is the bottom number or the *diastolic pressure.*
15. At this point, you can open the screw completely to let the remaining air out of the cuff.
16. Remove the stethoscope from your ears and then take the cuff off the patient’s arm.
17. Record your patient’s blood pressure on your Vital Signs Log.
18. If you need to recheck your reading, use the opposite arm or wait at least 5 minutes before rechecking on the same arm.
19. While the patient is relaxed, take their pulse using the radial artery. Using a watch with a second hand or a digital stopwatch, count how many beats you feel in 60 seconds. This is your patient’s pulse measured in beats per minute (bpm). If your patient is healthy and has no cardiac history, you can take the pulse for 30 seconds and then multiply by two to get their pulse reading. Record their pulse on your Vital Signs Log.
20. Clean the earpieces of the stethoscope with alcohol.