

Crime, inflation bothering you? Check blood pressure for 50 cents

By LYNN ORR

Crime on the streets, pollution spiraling inflation and political hassles—enough to make your blood pressure rise? If so, you can find out at the Livonia Mall.

By fitting your left arm into a cuff on the Vita-stat machine in the Sears court, shoppers can get a blood pressure reading in 50 seconds without visiting the doctor's office.

For 50 cents the pressure checker guarantees an accurate reading with the most sophisticated electronic computer yet devised, according to the instructions. The mall is the second Michigan location to offer such a machine.

Livonia residents Alex and Loretta Scherba of Norner spent \$1 to check the machine's accuracy and found it correct. The 50-year-old Mrs. Scherba's reading was normal. She takes medication to keep her blood pressure normal and at 125 over 92, as reading similar to the one he

gets at his doctor's, he was pleased with the results.

"IT SOMETIMES goes up to 140 over 85, but I'm in good shape today," he said. Blood pressure can vary greatly, and only your doctor can say what is normal for you, instructions on the machine read. A list of average readings categorized into ages allows the shopper to approximate the normalcy of his reading.

An emergency release button in the event of electrical failure has been installed to free a checker's arm.

Owners of the machine, Midwest Medical Services of West Bloomfield placed the Vita-Stat checker in the mall one month ago and have received favorable comments.

One man called us and said he had a very high reading and decided to go to the doctor. He came in medication to control his blood pressure and was pleased to have had the warning, said Midwest representative Mary Lieberman.

In some individuals the blood pressure is difficult to detect. To prevent false readings, the machine is designed to display a 000 over 000 reading when the 50 cents is returned.

Elizabeth Harris of West Bloomfield was shopping at the mall when she decided to check her blood pressure.

"I wanted to see how close it was to the doctor's and it was pretty close," she said. David Jackson and friend Carol Seidberg of Livonia also decided to check the machine.

I just am concerned about what people will do when they get the information," said Jackson, who is a practical nurse. I'd like to know if they're going to check on it if it's not normal.

He added that body weight and height are also important in getting a blood pressure reading, but he was impressed with his own accurate reading.

The machine's reading is attained through a microphone in the cuff that picks up the pulse and registers the blood

pressure, according to Ms. Lieberman.

THE FIRST READING is the systolic reading or the pressure exerted to stop the blood flow. The second reading, the diastolic reading, is the slowest pace. Jackson explained it in layman's terms.


"It's like taking a rubber ball and squeezing it all the way until it stops. The systolic reading is all the pressure I exert to stop the flow. As it releases, the blood flowing at its slowest pace is the systolic reading."

According to Ms. Lieberman, the company ran 5,000 tests on the machine, with a doctor taking blood pressure on one arm while the machine recorded the reading on the other arm.


"All the tests were accurate," she said. Jackson isn't sure the machine will prove valuable unless people take it seriously, but he's convinced of the machine's future success.

As long as it's computerized, people will put in their money.

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With his left arm firmly in the grip of the pressure checker, Dave Jackson (seated) and Carol Seidberg await the results of a 60-second blood-pressure reading recorded on the Vita-stat machine. (Staff photo by Art Emanuel)



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