



American Heart Association®

Healthy for Good™

YW3

YOUR WELL-BEING

The Role of Food and Your Health: Blood Pressure

Time: 70 Minutes

Join us to learn how food can impact overall health and why blood pressure is a critical health factor. Receive guidance to help you set goals to improve your health.

OBJECTIVES:

- Meet with a health professional to get a personal blood pressure reading.
- Understand how food affects your blood pressure.
- Describe what causes high blood pressure.
- Identify at least two strategies for controlling blood pressure.

SETUP

- Review resource list and print it out. Purchase all needed supplies.
- Set up stations for participant blood pressure checks.
- Contact health care professionals in advance to ask them to attend the event. They'll take the participants' blood pressure readings and briefly discuss the results with them.
- Provide computer, internet access and projector, if available.

INTRO (10 Minutes)

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
- Take care of any housekeeping items (closest bathroom, water fountain, etc.).
- Give a brief description of the educational experience.
- Engage in an icebreaker to measure topic knowledge from the options provided in the Welcome Toolkit.

DEMO (10 Minutes)

- Play video(s) or demonstrate content (see demo script).

ACTIVITY (20 Minutes)

- Participants will meet one-on-one with health care professionals to:
 - Talk about their numbers
 - Develop a plan of action

RECAP (10 Minutes)

- Pass out handout(s) and review with participants.

GOAL SETTING/CLOSING (20 Minutes)

- Engage in a goal-setting activity from the options provided in the Welcome Toolkit provided as part of the instructional materials.
- Thank participants and encourage them to join the next activity. (Provide date/time/location if known.)



The Role of Food and Your Health: Blood Pressure Resource List

HANDOUTS/VIDEOS

Find these resources on AHA's YouTube channel or heart.org/healthyforgood

- ☐ Video – **The Role of Food and Your Health: Blood Pressure**
- ☐ Recipe – **Tomato Basil Soup (low-sodium soup)**

Find these resources in this lesson

- ☐ Handout – **Life's Essential 8: How to Manage Blood Pressure infographic**
- ☐ Handout – **Blood Pressure Chart**
- ☐ Handout – **How to Measure Blood Pressure Infographic**
- ☐ Handout – **Your Salty Ways In 21 Days!**
- ☐ Handout – **Setting SMART Goals**

SPACE SETUP

- ☐ Chairs and tables
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Folders
- ☐ Computer, internet access and projector, if available

ACTIVITY SUPPLIES*

- ☐ Blood pressure monitors
- ☐ Blank index cards (for health care professional to write down blood pressure measurements for participants)

*Purchase appropriate number of supplies for your participants.

The Role of Food and Your Health: Blood Pressure Demo Script



SAY:

When your heart pumps blood through the blood vessels, the blood pushes against the walls of your vessels. This pushing creates blood pressure.



We need blood pressure to move oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the rest of the body. Your arteries can stretch to allow more blood to push through them. How much they stretch depends on how hard blood pushes against the artery walls.



For your arteries to stay healthy, your blood pressure needs to be within a healthy range. For some of us, blood pressure can get too high. High blood pressure is also called **hypertension**.



Blood pressure is measured using a blood pressure monitor. It's recorded as two numbers. The **systolic pressure** (upper number) measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats. The **diastolic pressure** (lower number) measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart rests between beats.



Nearly half of U.S. adults have high blood pressure. Many don't even know they have it. The only way to know you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked.



High blood pressure can cause our hearts to work harder to supply the blood our bodies need. In addition, high blood pressure can damage the inner lining of the arteries. This can lead to coronary heart disease, heart failure, heart attack, stroke and other serious conditions.



High blood pressure is called the "silent killer" because people don't have symptoms. However, some **risk factors** can make us more likely to develop it. Some of these **risk factors** we can't control, such as:

- Family history
- Age
- Gender
- Race



There are risk factors we can control, such as:

- Poor diet (especially one that's high in sodium)
- Physical inactivity
- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol.



By themselves or in combination, these factors play a big role in developing high blood pressure.



It's important to eat healthy. Try including lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and low-fat and fat-free dairy products in your diet. Also, limiting sodium can help lower your blood pressure.



Many common foods add more sodium to our diet than we might realize. Over 70% of sodium in our diet comes from eating **packaged and prepared foods** – not from salting our food when we cook or eat. Here are some popular foods that can add too much sodium to your diet:

- **Bread and rolls** – Check the Nutrition Facts labels to find brands with the lowest sodium.
- **Pizza** – A slice of pizza with traditional toppings can have more than half of the daily recommended sodium. Use more veggies as toppings.
- **Sandwiches** – One sandwich or burger can give you more than the daily recommended sodium. Instead of a full sandwich, eat half a sandwich and add a side salad.
- **Cold cuts and cured meats** – Two ounces or six thin slices of deli meat can contain as much as half the daily recommended sodium. Look for brands with lower amounts of sodium.
- **Soup** – One cup of canned soup can have 100 to 940 milligrams of sodium. Compare Nutrition Facts labels.
- **Burritos and tacos** – Two teaspoons of packaged taco seasoning can have as much as 430 milligrams of sodium. Make your own by combining ½ teaspoon each of cumin, oregano, chili powder and garlic powder for only 42 milligrams of sodium.



Reducing sodium can make us feel better while helping our blood pressure stay in check.

The Role of Food and Your Health: Blood Pressure Activity Script



SAY:

Today, you will meet with a health care professional and learn about your blood pressure. To protect your privacy, the professional will write down your numbers. You'll also learn about healthy and unhealthy blood pressure ranges.

If your blood pressure is not in the normal range, we suggest you visit your health care professional for advice.

HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE

High blood pressure (hypertension) can harm heart and brain health and usually has no symptoms. It damages blood vessels and can lead to serious health problems. It can cause other health problems, like: heart attack, stroke, dementia, heart failure, kidney disease/failure and vision loss. It can even lead to erectile dysfunction in men and reduced sexual arousal in women.



UNDERSTAND READINGS

Blood pressure is typically recorded as two numbers, written as a ratio like this:



Read as "117 over 76" millimeters of mercury.

SYSTOLIC

The top number, the higher of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats (when the heart muscle contracts).

DIASTOLIC

The bottom number, the lower of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is resting between heart beats.

| BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY | SYSTOLIC mm Hg (top/upper number) | | DIASTOLIC mm Hg (bottom/lower number) |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------|--|
| NORMAL | LESS THAN 120 | and | LESS THAN 80 |
| ELEVATED | 120-129 | and | LESS THAN 80 |
| STAGE 1 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure) | 130-139 | or | 80-89 |
| STAGE 2 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure) | 140 OR HIGHER | or | 90 OR HIGHER |
| SEVERE HYPERTENSION (If you don't have symptoms*, call your health care professional.) | HIGHER THAN 180 | and/or | HIGHER THAN 120 |
| HYPERTENSIVE EMERGENCY (If you have any of these symptoms*, call 911.) | HIGHER THAN 180 | and/or | HIGHER THAN 120 |

*symptoms: chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking



TRACK LEVELS



You can track your blood pressure at home with a validated blood pressure device. Some pharmacies, health clinics and fire stations have free monitoring stations. A high blood pressure diagnosis must be confirmed by a health care professional.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS



EAT SMART

Lower your sodium, saturated and trans fats and added sugars. Eat a DASH-like pattern; eat meals with lots of vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes, whole grains, healthy nontropical oils, lean protein such as fish, seafood, low-fat dairy and, if desired, lean poultry and meats. Limit sugary foods and drinks, red meats, processed meats, salty snacks and foods that are highly processed.



MOVE MORE

Exercise can help lower high blood pressure levels. It can also improve your mood and clear your mind.



MANAGE WEIGHT

If you have overweight or obesity, even a weight loss of at least 5%, can lower or prevent high blood pressure.



NO NICOTINE

Every time you smoke, vape or use tobacco or nicotine pouches, the nicotine can cause a temporary increase in blood pressure.



SLEEP WELL

Short sleep (less than 7 hours) and poor-quality sleep are associated with high blood pressure.



ALCOHOL

Drink less or no alcohol to lower or prevent high blood pressure.

Blood Pressure Chart

| BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY | SYSTOLIC mm Hg (top/upper number) | | DIASTOLIC mm Hg (bottom/lower number) |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------|--|
| NORMAL | LESS THAN 120 | and | LESS THAN 80 |
| ELEVATED | 120–129 | and | LESS THAN 80 |
| STAGE 1 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure) | 130–139 | or | 80–89 |
| STAGE 2 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure) | 140 OR HIGHER | or | 90 OR HIGHER |
| SEVERE HYPERTENSION (If you don't have symptoms*, call your health care professional.) | HIGHER THAN 180 | and/or | HIGHER THAN 120 |
| HYPERTENSIVE EMERGENCY (If you have any of these symptoms*, call 911.) | HIGHER THAN 180 | and/or | HIGHER THAN 120 |

Two numbers are recorded when measuring your blood pressure. **Systolic** blood pressure is the first (top/upper) number. It measures the pressure your blood is pushing against your artery walls when the heart beats. **Diastolic** blood pressures is the second (bottom/lower) number. It measures the pressure your blood is pushing against your artery walls while the heart muscle rests between beats. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

The six blood pressure categories as recognized by the American Heart Association are:

Normal

Blood pressure numbers less than 120/80 are within the normal range. If your results fall in this range, stick with heart-healthy habits such as following a balanced diet and getting regular exercise.

Elevated

Elevated blood pressure consistently ranges from 120 to 129 systolic and less than 80 diastolic. If your blood pressure is elevated, stick with or adopt heart-healthy habits such as following a balanced diet and getting regular exercise. The goal is to prevent reaching hypertension Stage 1.

Stage 1 Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

Blood pressure consistently ranges from 130 to 139 systolic or 80–89 diastolic. Health care professionals should prescribe lifestyle changes. They may consider adding medication based on your risk of heart disease or stroke and should add medication if you have other conditions such as diabetes, heart failure and kidney disease.

Stage 2 Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

Blood pressure consistently measures at 140 systolic or 90 diastolic or higher. Health care professionals should prescribe blood pressure medication and lifestyle changes.

Severe Hypertension

If your blood pressure is higher than 180/120 mm Hg, wait 1 minute and take your blood pressure again.

If the second reading is just as high, check for these symptoms: chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking.

If you do not have any of these symptoms or any other new and concerning symptoms, you likely have severe hypertension. You should contact your health care professional. Your health care professional may start or adjust blood pressure medication.

Hypertensive Emergency

Call 911 if your blood pressure is higher than 180/120 mm Hg and you are experiencing symptoms that may include: chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking.

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HOME BLOOD PRESSURE MEASUREMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Before You Measure

- No smoking, caffeinated beverages, alcohol or exercise 30 minutes prior.
- Use a validated device with the correct cuff size. (Visit [Validate BP](#) to find a device you can trust.)
- Empty your bladder.
- Sit quietly for more than 5 minutes and do not talk.

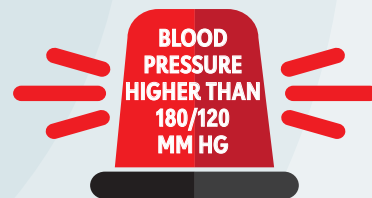
Proper Positioning

- Sit upright with back supported, feet on floor and legs uncrossed.
- Rest your arm comfortably on a flat surface at heart level.
- Wrap the cuff on your bare skin above the bend of the elbow, not over clothing.



During Measurement

- Stay relaxed and do not talk.
- Take at least two readings, 1 minute apart.
- Record all results once measurement is completed and share them with your health care professional to help confirm your office blood pressure category.



**MAY BE A
HYPERTENSIVE
EMERGENCY***

American Heart Association recommended office blood pressure categories

| BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY | SYSTOLIC mm Hg (top/upper number) | | DIASTOLIC mm Hg (bottom/lower number) |
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| HYPERTENSIVE EMERGENCY (If you have any of these symptoms*, call 911.) | HIGHER THAN 180 | and/or | HIGHER THAN 120 |

*symptoms: chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking

* Wait a few minutes and take blood pressure again.

* If your blood pressure is still high and there are no other signs or symptoms, contact your health care professional.

* If you are experiencing signs of possible organ damage, such as chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking, call 911.

Learn more at
heart.org/BP

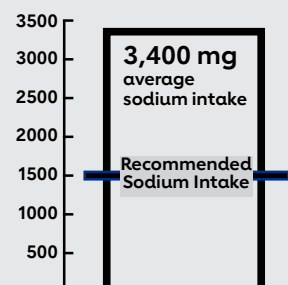
Change Your Salty Ways In 21 Days!

Face feel puffy? Jeans fit tighter?

In 3 weeks you can:

- Change your sodium palate
- Start enjoying foods with less sodium
- Reduce bloating

On average, American adults eat more than 3,400 milligrams (mg) of sodium daily - **more than double the American Heart Association's recommended limit of 1,500 mg for most adults.**



WEEK 1

Breads & Rolls / Cold Cuts & Cured Meats

- Look for lower sodium items
- Track your sodium consumption
- Log how much sodium you've shaved out of your diet

WEEK 2

Pizza / Poultry

- If you eat pizza, make it one with less cheese and meats
- Add veggies to your pizza instead
- Use fresh poultry rather than fried, canned or processed

WEEK 3

Soups / Sandwiches

- One cup of chicken noodle soup can have over 830mg of sodium
- Check labels and try lower sodium varieties
- Use lower sodium meats, cheeses & condiments & plenty of vegetables to build healthier sandwiches



Look for the **Heart Check mark** to find products that can help you make smarter choices about the foods you eat.

Sodium is found in almost all foods including mixed dishes such as sandwiches, burgers, and tacos; rice, pasta, and grain dishes; pizza; meat, poultry, and seafood dishes; and soups.

Learning to read and understand the Nutrition Facts label can help you make healthier choices.

Choose wisely and watch portion control.

heart.org/Sodium

SPECIFIC

- What do you want to accomplish?

MEASURABLE

- How will you track your progress your goal?

ACHIEVABLE

- Is reaching your goal possible with your full effort?

REALISTIC

- Do you have the resources and ability to achieve your goal?
If not, how can you get them?

TIME-BOUND

- When will your goal be achieved?

EXAMPLE OF A SMART GOAL:

I will increase the number of fruit servings I eat daily by 2 cups within the next 3 months.

Personal SMART goal:
