



American Heart Association®

Healthy Smiles, Healthy Hearts™

Ready, Set, Go!

Blood Pressure Screening and Referral Quick Guide



Delta Dental is proud to collaborate
with the American Heart Association's
Healthy Smiles, Healthy Hearts™ initiative.

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Program Overview

The American Heart Association's Healthy Smiles, Healthy Hearts™ initiative, in collaboration with Delta Dental was created to advance that integration by equipping dental professionals to identify early signs of cardiovascular risk and connect patients to care. While evidence supports a link between oral and cardiovascular health, integrating these domains into a cohesive care model remains an untapped opportunity. Dental professionals are uniquely positioned to contribute to whole-person care by educating patients on the systemic impact of oral hygiene—particularly its role in reducing cardiovascular risk.

Oral Health Care is Overall Health Care

Chronic gum inflammation has been linked to systemic conditions such as respiratory disease, diabetes, coronary artery disease, stroke, and rheumatoid arthritis. Evidence suggests that treating gum disease may help reduce the impact of coronary artery disease, with studies showing lower medical costs and fewer hospitalizations among patients who received periodontal care.

Dental Procedure Chair Blood Pressure Reading

The 2025 AHA/ACC Guideline for the Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Management of High Blood Pressure in Adults reemphasizes that patients should sit upright with back supported, feet on floor and legs uncrossed.

Modification due to Limitation Consideration: Have the patient sit on the dental chair at a 90-degree angle, like they were sitting on a bench. This position is used to bend the knees at a 90-degree angle and keep the patients' feet flat on the floor.

Low

Scripting: *"I'm checking your blood pressure because I'm a part of your overall health care team. The reason we're checking your blood pressure is that your heart health is connected to your oral health. Your blood pressure was XX/XX; this is in the **lower-than-normal range.**"*

Education: If your blood pressure is lower-than-normal, encourage follow-up (verbal referral) to Primary Care Professional



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Normal

Scripting: *"I'm checking your blood pressure because I'm a part of your overall health care team. The reason we're checking your blood pressure is that your heart health is connected to your oral health. BP is just one component of your overall health. Your blood pressure was XX/XX; this is within the **normal range**."*

Education: If your blood pressure is in the **normal range**, stick with your current lifestyle and practices. Include an encouraging statement ("Keep up the good work!")

Elevated

Scripting: *"I'm checking your blood pressure because I'm a part of your overall health care team. The reason we're checking your blood pressure is that your heart health is connected to your oral health. BP is just one component of your overall health. Your blood pressure was XX/XX; this is in the **elevated range**."*

Education: 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 Stage 1 hypertension. Encourage follow-up (verbal referral) to Primary Care Professional and monitor BP at home.

Stage 1

Scripting: *"I'm checking your blood pressure because I'm a part of your overall health care team. The reason we're checking your blood pressure is that your heart health is connected to your oral health. BP is just one component of your overall health. Your blood pressure was XX/XX; this is in the **Stage 1 hypertensive range**."*

Education: In **hypertension Stage 1**, discuss the importance of numbers and suggest lifestyle modifications (stick with or adopt heart-healthy habits such as following a balanced diet and getting regular exercise). Encourage follow-up (verbal referral) to Primary Care Professional and monitor BP at home.

"Follow up with your Primary Care Professional because there are additional factors for this BP level."



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Stage 2

Scripting: *"I'm checking your blood pressure because I'm a part of your overall health care team. The reason we're checking your blood pressure is that your heart health is connected to your oral health. BP is just one component of your overall health. Your blood pressure was XX/XX; this is in the **Stage 2 hypertensive range.**"*

Education: In **Stage 2**, your dental professional should confirm medication usage based on medical history questions and/or intake form. If patient confirms they have medication but did not take today, encourage consistent usage and follow up with their PCP. Discuss the importance of numbers and suggest lifestyle modifications (stick with or adopt heart-healthy habits such as following a balanced diet and getting regular exercise). Encourage follow-up (physical referral) to Primary Care Professional and monitor BP at home.

"Follow up with your Primary Care Professional because there are additional factors for this BP level."

After waiting 5 minutes, rescreen in a quiet, dim room with the patient seated properly—feet flat on the floor, arm supported at heart level, and using a correctly sized cuff.

Hypertensive Emergency

Scripting: *"I'm checking your blood pressure because I'm a part of your overall health care team. The reason we're checking your blood pressure is that your heart health is connected to your oral health. BP is just one component of your overall health. Your blood pressure was XX/XX; this is in the **Hypertensive Emergency range.**"*

Education: In **severe hypertension**, if your blood pressure is higher than 180/120mm Hg:

- o Rescreen BP after 5 minutes patient has sat in dark room, their feet on the floor, and proper blood pressure cuff and positioning.

- If the second reading is just as high, check for these symptoms:
 - o Chest pain
 - o Shortness of breath
 - o Back pain
 - o Numbness
 - o Weakness
 - o Change in vision
 - o Difficulty speaking



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- If you do not have any of these symptoms or any other new and concerning symptoms, you may have severe hypertension. You should contact your health care professional. Your dental professional can refer you to your Primary Care Professional.
- *“Follow up with your Primary Care Professional because there are additional factors for this BP level.”*
- In **hypertensive emergency**, call 911 if your blood pressure is higher than 180/120 mm Hg and you are experiencing symptoms that may include:
 - o Chest pain
 - o Shortness of breath
 - o Back pain
 - o Numbness
 - o Weakness
 - o Change in vision
 - o Difficulty speaking

Educational Follow Up and Resources

Dental professionals can refer patients to these websites:

- [Healthy Smiles, Healthy Hearts website](#)
- [The Connection Between Oral Health and Heart Health](#)
- [New AHA/ACC High Blood Pressure Guideline: Top 10 Things to Know](#)
- [Life's Essential 8™](#)
- [Low Blood Pressure - When Blood Pressure Is Too Low](#)

Considerations

Overcoming Barriers

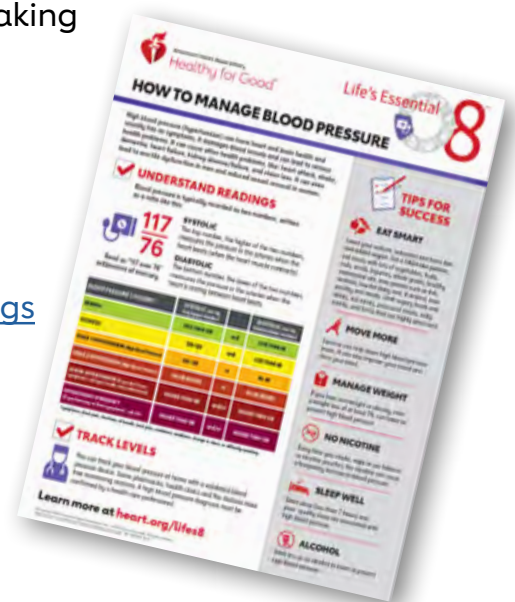
Barriers are common in oral health settings, especially with new processes that include “out-of-setting” interventions. Use the resources below to assist your organization in overcoming common barriers when they arise.

Caffeine Intake

For most coffee drinkers, a single cup isn't usually enough to raise blood pressure into the “hypertensive” range. Generally, 1–2 cups of coffee are considered safe—even for individuals with chronic hypertension—provided their blood pressure is well controlled (i.e., <130/80 mmHg on an average of at least two readings).

“The 2025 AHA High Blood Pressure Guideline recommend that individuals with chronic hypertension limit caffeine to <300 mg per day. Those with severe, uncontrolled hypertension should avoid more than one cup daily.”

SOURCE [\(American Heart Association BP Guidelines 2025\)](#)





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[Impact of Intensive Periodontal Treatment on Improving Measures of Vascular Health](#)

Validated Devices for Blood Pressure Screening

To be listed on the Validated Device List, blood pressure devices must be validated for clinical accuracy and meet the VDL Criteria, as determined through an independent review process.

[Home](#) | [Validate BP](#)



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