



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 factor for your health. Receive guidance to help you set goals to improve your health.

OBJECTIVES:

- Meet with a health professional to obtain 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 necessary supplies after reviewing the [HFL Cost Calculator](#).
- Set up stations for participant cholesterol and blood sugar measurements.
- Contact health care professionals in advance to ask them to attend the lesson event. They'll be taking the participants' blood pressure readings and briefly discussing 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 gauge topic knowledge from the bank of 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 personal biometric numbers and 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 bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#). Pass out the Setting SMART Goals handout to participants.
- Thank participants and encourage them to join the next activity. (Provide date/time/location if known.)



NOTES: Read legal liability disclaimer before activity: [Food Liability Disclaimer](#). Refer to Resource List for all necessary supplies and handouts. This Healthy for Life® Educational Experience was created by Aramark and the American Heart Association as part of our Healthy for Life® 20 By 20 Initiative. We are proud to be working together to help improve the health of all Americans.

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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 Simple 7: Manage Blood Pressure Infographic](#)
- Handout – [Blood Pressure Chart](#)
- Handout – [How to Measure Blood Pressure](#)
- Handout – [The Salty Six Infographic](#)
- Handout – [Setting SMART Goals](#)

SPACE SETUP

- Chairs and tables for participants
- Pens for participants
- 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)
- Pens

*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 the blood throughout our bodies, so it can provide our organs and tissues with the oxygen they need. Healthy arteries (the blood vessels that carry oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the rest of the body) are elastic. They can stretch to allow more blood to push through them. How much they stretch depends on how hard the blood pushes against the artery walls.



For your arteries to stay healthy, it's important that your blood pressure be within a healthy range. For some of us, blood pressure can get too high. High blood pressure is called **hypertension**.



Blood pressure is measured using a blood pressure monitor and it's recorded as two numbers. The **systolic pressure** (top number) measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is pumping blood. The **diastolic pressure** (bottom number) measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is resting between beats.



Most of the time, high blood pressure doesn't have a cause and is sometimes called the "silent killer" because people don't have symptoms. However, there are some **risk factors** (or conditions that can make us more likely to develop it) for high blood pressure. Some risk factors are outside of our control, like family history, age, gender and race. There are other risk factors that we can control, like poor diet (especially one that's high in sodium), physical inactivity, smoking and drinking too much alcohol. By themselves or in combination, these factors play a big role in developing hypertension.



High blood pressure, if not treated, 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, leading to coronary heart disease, heart failure, heart attack, stroke and other serious conditions.



It's important to eat healthy by 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.



Did you know that a lot of common foods add more sodium to our diet than we might realize? Despite what many people think, most dietary sodium (over 70%) comes from eating **packaged and prepared foods**—not from salting our food when we cook or eat. Here are six popular foods that can add a lot of sodium to your diet:

- **Bread and rolls** – check the nutrition facts labels to find the brand with the lowest sodium.
- **Pizza** – a slice of pizza with lots of traditional toppings can have more than half of our daily recommended sodium. Try for more veggies as toppings.
- **Sandwiches** – a sandwich or burger can give you more than your daily recommended sodium. Instead of a full sandwich, eat half a sandwich and add a side salad.
- **Cold cuts and cured meats** – One 2-ounce serving or six thin slices of deli meat can contain as much as half of our daily recommended dietary sodium. Look for brands with lower amounts of sodium.
- **Soup** – One cup of canned soup can have 100 to 940 milligrams of sodium. Be sure to compare nutrition facts labels.
- **Burritos and tacos** – Two teaspoons of packaged taco seasoning can have as much as 430 milligrams of sodium. Try making your own by combining ½ teaspoon each of cumin, oregano, chili powder and garlic powder for a total of only 42 milligrams of sodium.



Cutting back on 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 are going to meet with a health care professional and learn about your blood pressure. To ensure your privacy, the professional will write down your measurements. You'll also learn about healthy and unhealthy blood pressure ranges.

If your blood pressure measurement is not in the 'normal' range, we recommend you visit with your own health care provider for advice and further consultation.



HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE

1 UNDERSTAND READINGS

The first step to managing blood pressure is to understand what the levels mean and what is considered normal, elevated, high blood pressure (hypertension) and hypertensive crisis. heart.org/BPLevels



Blood pressure is typically recorded as two numbers:

117
76

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.

Read as "117 over 76 millimeters of mercury."

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (top number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (bottom number)
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80
Elevated Blood Pressure	120 to 129	and	less than 80
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	130 to 139	or	80 to 89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (Call your doctor immediately)	higher than 180	and/or	higher than 120

2 TRACK LEVELS



American Heart Association.

Check. Change. Control.®



Check.



Change.



Control.

Health care providers can take blood pressure readings and provide recommendations.

Check. Change. Control. helps you track your progress in reducing blood pressure.

Track online at ccctracker.com/AHA

LEARN MORE AT HEART.ORG/MYLIFECHECK AND HEART.ORG/HBP

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3 TIPS FOR SUCCESS



EAT SMART

Eat a healthy diet of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins, lean animal proteins and fish. Limit sodium, saturated fats and added sugars. Limit sugary foods and drinks, fatty or processed meats, salty foods, refined carbohydrates and highly processed foods.

heart.org/EatSmart



MOVE MORE

Physical activity helps control blood pressure, weight and stress levels. heart.org/MoveMore



MANAGE WEIGHT

If you're overweight, even a slight weight loss can reduce high blood pressure. heart.org/Weight



DON'T SMOKE

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



SLEEP WELL

Short sleep (less than 6 hours) and poor-quality sleep are associated with high blood pressure.

Blood Pressure Chart

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 - 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 - 139	or	80 - 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSION CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

Two numbers are recorded when measuring your blood pressure. The top, or upper, number (called **systolic** pressure) measures the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. The bottom, or lower, number (called **diastolic** pressure) measures the pressure while your heart rests between beats. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

The five blood pressure ranges as recognized by the American Heart Association are:

Normal

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

Elevated

Elevated blood pressure readings consistently range from 120-129 systolic and less than 80 mm Hg diastolic. People with elevated blood pressure are likely to develop high blood pressure unless steps are taken to control the condition.

Hypertension Stage 1

Blood pressure consistently ranges from 130-139 systolic or 80-89 mm Hg diastolic. Health care providers are likely to prescribe lifestyle changes and may consider adding blood pressure medication based on your risk of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD), such as heart attack or stroke.

Hypertension Stage 2

Blood pressure consistently ranges at 140 systolic or 90 mm Hg diastolic or higher. Health care providers are likely to prescribe blood pressure medications and lifestyle changes.

Hypertensive Crisis

This stage requires medical attention. If your blood pressure readings suddenly exceed 180/120 mm Hg, wait five minutes and then test again. If your readings are still unusually high, contact your health care provider immediately.

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BLOOD PRESSURE MEASUREMENT INSTRUCTIONS

DON'T SMOKE, EXERCISE, DRINK CAFFEINATED BEVERAGES OR ALCOHOL WITHIN 30 MINUTES OF MEASUREMENT.

REST IN A CHAIR FOR AT LEAST 5 MINUTES WITH YOUR LEFT ARM RESTING COMFORTABLY ON A FLAT SURFACE AT HEART LEVEL. SIT CALMLY AND DON'T TALK.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE RELAXED. SIT STILL IN A CHAIR WITH YOUR FEET FLAT ON THE FLOOR WITH YOUR BACK STRAIGHT AND SUPPORTED.

TAKE AT LEAST TWO READINGS 1 MIN. APART IN MORNING BEFORE TAKING MEDICATIONS, AND IN EVENING BEFORE DINNER. RECORD ALL RESULTS.

USE PROPERLY CALIBRATED AND VALIDATED INSTRUMENT. CHECK THE CUFF SIZE AND FIT.

PLACE THE BOTTOM OF THE CUFF ABOVE THE BEND OF THE ELBOW.

American Heart Association recommended blood pressure levels

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120-129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130-139	or	80-89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120



*Wait a few minutes and take blood pressure again. If it's still high, contact your doctor immediately.

LEARN MORE AT HEART.ORG/HBP

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**THE
SALTY
SIX**

DID YOU KNOW?



THESE SIX POPULAR FOODS CAN ADD HIGH LEVELS OF SODIUM TO YOUR DIET¹

The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 milligrams (mgs) a day and an ideal limit of no more than 1,500 mg per day for most adults.



When you see the Heart-Check mark on a product, you know the food has been certified to meet nutritional criteria for heart-healthy foods, including sodium.



BREADS & ROLLS

Some foods that you eat several times a day, such as bread, add up to a lot of sodium even though each serving may not seem high in sodium. Check the labels to find lower-sodium varieties.

1



PIZZA

A slice of pizza with several toppings can contain more than half of your daily recommended dietary sodium. Limit the cheese and add more veggies to your next slice.

2



SANDWICHES

A sandwich or burger from a fast food restaurant can contain more than 100 percent of your daily suggested dietary sodium. Try half a sandwich with a side salad (with low-sodium dressing) instead.

3



COLD CUTS & CURED MEATS

One 2 oz. serving, or 6 thin slices, of deli meat can contain as much as half of your daily recommended dietary sodium. Look for lower-sodium varieties of your favorite lunch meats.

4



SOUP

Sodium in one cup of canned soup can range from 100 to as much as 940 milligrams—more than half of your daily recommended intake. Check the labels to find lower sodium varieties.

5



BURRITOS & TACOS

Taco toppings and burrito fillings can pack a big sodium punch. Choose burritos and tacos that are full of veggies and have less meat and cheese.

6

¹Quader ZS, Zhao L, Gillespie C, et al. Sodium Intake Among Persons Aged ≥2 Years — United States, 2013–2014. MMWR. Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2017;66:324–328. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6612a3>.

SPECIFIC

- What exactly do you want to accomplish?

MEASURABLE

- How will you track your progress towards 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:
