

Directions for Presenters

**This slide is for people who want to present this health lesson to a group.
If you are using these slides for your own health education, please disregard this slide.**

Review all the slides and presenter notes before your presentation. If you can, print out the presenter notes to have them handy in case you need them.

Introduction: (30 seconds)

- Greet the audience.
- Introduce yourself and your topic.
- Let people know they can take pictures of any of the slides they find helpful.

At the end of your presentation:

- Thank your audience for their time and open the discussion to questions.
- If there are questions you cannot answer, please refer them to our [heart.org](https://www.heart.org) website and social media handles for more information.

BLOOD PRESSURE

What Is It, and How Can You Control It?



HEALTH LESSONS
HEART.ORG | 2025

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WHAT WE DO

Investing in and supporting lifesaving heart and brain research for over 100 years.

FUNDED PACEMAKERS AND ICDS RESEARCH



Contributed to developing cutting-edge devices, including leadless pacemakers and wearable defibrillators.

DEVELOPMENT OF CPR GUIDELINES AND CONTINUED EFFORTS



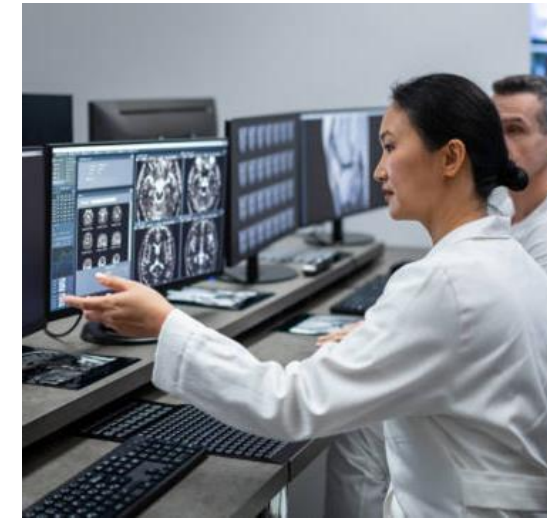
Created CPR and AED guidelines and pushing for laws to require CPR training in schools and more public AEDs to help save lives.

FUNDING HEART DISEASE RESEARCH



Investing in groundbreaking research that has led to lifesaving treatments and innovations in cardiovascular care.

FUNDING INNOVATION IN HEART DISEASE DIAGNOSTICS



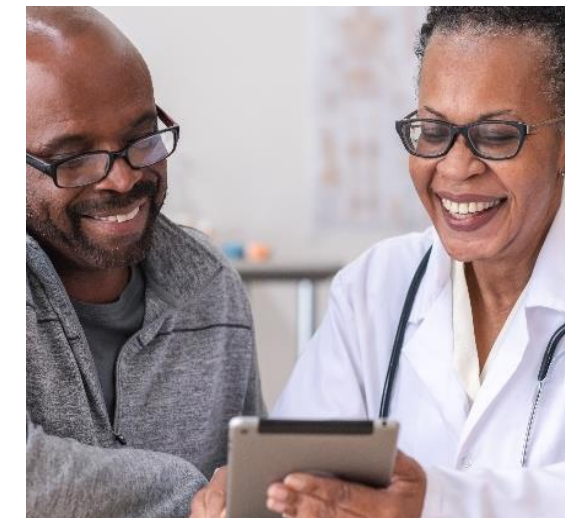
Advancing imaging techniques, such as MRI and CT scans, along with biomarkers for the early detection of heart disease.

FUNDING ACUTE STROKE CARE



Funding research to support timely intervention strategies for patients with stroke, which has significantly improved survival rates and recovery outcomes.

DEVELOPMENT OF HYPERTENSION GUIDELINES AND RESEARCH

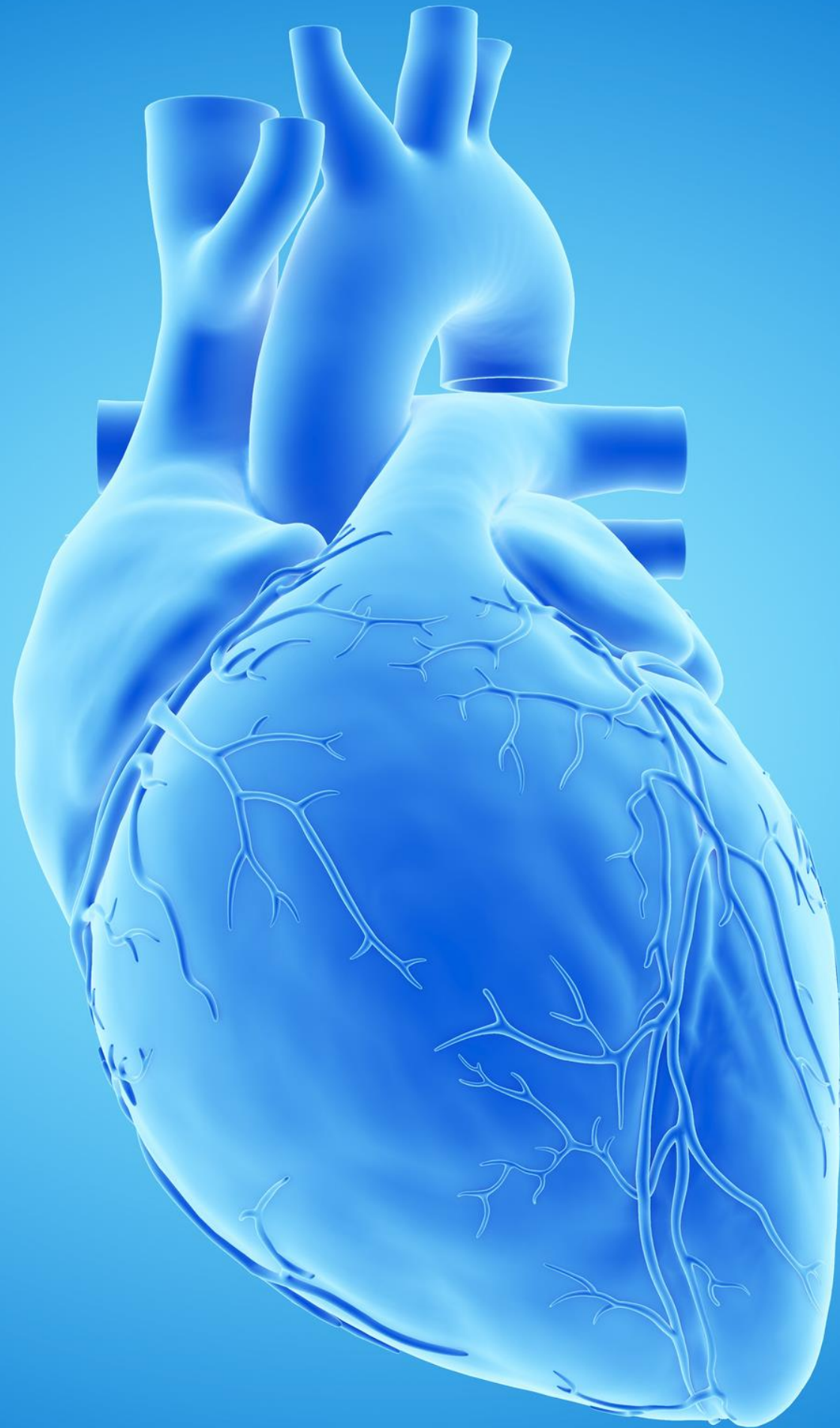


Updated blood pressure guidelines with collaborators to support early detection and care. Funded research on causes, prevention and treatment.

Heart Disease

More than half of the people in the U.S. do not know that heart disease is the leading cause of death.

It kills more people than any other cause, including cancer.





Cardiovascular-Kidney-Metabolic (CKM) Health

Your heart, kidneys, and the way the body creates and uses energy (metabolic health) have different jobs, but together they affect your overall health.

When one area of your health isn't working well, it can hurt other areas.

For example:

- High blood pressure (BP) can harm the heart, raising the risk of heart attack and stroke.
- High BP can damage the kidneys over time, potentially leading to chronic kidney disease.
- High BP often occurs with diabetes and obesity, commonly making CKM health problems worse together.

Most people don't know how closely these problems are connected. Understanding and protecting all three systems can improve overall health and lower your risk of heart disease or stroke.



What You Will Learn



High Blood Pressure

- What it is
- What causes it
- How to manage it

You Are Not Alone

High Blood Pressure



High blood pressure is often called the “silent killer” because it has no clear symptoms.

Nearly half of American adults have high blood pressure.

Many don't even know they have it.

High Blood Pressure Puts You at Greater Risk of:



- Heart Disease
- Heart Failure
- Atrial Fibrillation
- Stroke
- Dementia
- Chronic Kidney Disease
- Vision Loss
- Sexual Dysfunction

What Is Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force of blood as it pumps against your vessel walls.



- 1** When your heart beats, it pumps blood into your blood vessels.
- 2** This creates pressure against the blood vessel walls, causing your blood to flow to all parts of your body.
- 3** High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is when this pressure is consistently too high.

What the Numbers Mean



Top Number = **Systolic Blood Pressure**

Shows how much pressure your blood is pushing against your artery walls **when the heart beats.**

Bottom Number = **Diastolic Blood Pressure**

Shows how much pressure your blood is pushing against your artery walls **while the heart is resting between beats.**

Let's Talk About Risk Factors

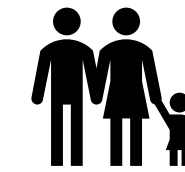
Risk factors are things that can increase your chances of getting sick or having health problems.



What are some things **you CAN'T control** that would affect your blood pressure?

Things That Put You at Risk

that **CAN'T** be changed or are hard to control



Family history

If your parents have high blood pressure, you might be at higher risk.



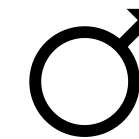
Race/ethnicity

High blood pressure is more common in non-Hispanic Black adults.



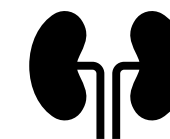
Age

The older you are, the higher the risk (though young people can have high blood pressure, too).



Sex

Men are at higher risk of developing high blood pressure until age 64. At 65 and older, women are more likely to get high blood pressure.



Chronic kidney disease

There is a relationship between your kidneys and cardiovascular health.



Obstructive sleep apnea

Sleep apnea episodes can lead to an increase in blood pressure.

Let's Talk About Risk Factors



What are some things
you CAN control
that might affect your
blood pressure?

Things That Put You at Risk

that CAN be changed



AVOID/STOP

- Alcohol (at the very least, limit it)
- Cigarette smoking
- Black licorice
- Some anti-inflammatory drugs (for example: NSAIDs such as ibuprofen)
- Herbal supplements such as St. John's wort
- Recreational drugs

LIMIT

- Caffeine
- Acetaminophen
- Decongestants (Use for shortest duration possible and avoid in severe or uncontrolled high blood pressure)

MANAGE

- Diabetes
- Being obese or overweight
- High cholesterol
- Unhealthy diet
- Being physically inactive

Know Your **Blood Pressure** Numbers

High blood pressure is
130/80 or higher

Blood Pressure Categories

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

heart.org/bplevels

When Should You Call Your Health Care Professional?

Severe Hypertension



High Blood Pressure with No Symptoms
= Severe Hypertension

Anything higher than 180 for systolic/top number and higher than 120 for diastolic/bottom number, you need to call your health care professional.

When Should You Call 911?

Hypertensive Emergency



High Blood Pressure + Symptoms = Hypertensive Emergency

Anything higher than 180 for systolic/top number and higher than 120 for diastolic/bottom number that includes symptom(s) like:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Back pain
- Numbness
- Weakness
- Change in vision
- Difficulty speaking

You need to call 911 right away.

How to Take Your Blood Pressure at Home



30 minutes before:

- No smoking
- No exercise
- No caffeinated beverages
- No alcohol

To get an accurate measurement:

- Rest for at least 5 minutes.
- Don't talk.
- Rest your arm comfortably on a flat surface at heart level.
- Sit upright, back straight and supported.
- Keep legs uncrossed and feet flat on the floor.
- Use a properly validated device.
- The bottom of the cuff needs to be above the bend of the elbow.
- Wrap the cuff against your bare skin, not over clothing.

Partnering With Your Health Care Professional



Stick to the plan

It's vital to stick to the medication plan your health care professional has recommended.

Ask questions

If you have any concerns about side effects, discuss them with your doctor.

OTC medications

Discuss over-the-counter (OTC) medications with your pharmacist or doctor. Pain relievers or decongestants may affect your blood pressure.

Hypotension

When Blood Pressure Is Too Low



Symptoms of constant low blood pressure

- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Fainting
- Fatigue
- Neck or back pain
- Headache
- Blurred vision
- Heart palpitations, or feelings that your heart is skipping a beat, fluttering or beating too hard or too fast

High Blood Pressure and Sex

Challenges for Men



- Erectile dysfunction is common in men with high blood pressure.
- Some high blood pressure medications can also cause erectile dysfunction.
- Adjusting medications, lifestyle changes, and/or erectile dysfunction treatments can help.
- Talk to your health care professional about options.

High Blood Pressure and Sex

Challenges for Women



- High blood pressure can affect women's sexual health. It may be connected due to changes in blood vessel function and other risk factors such as age and hormonal changes. Certain medications may also contribute.
- It might also lower something called nitric oxide, which helps muscles relax.
- Talk to your health care professional if you have concerns.

Pregnancy

Prevention



Women with high blood pressure who are planning a pregnancy or are pregnant should talk to their health care professional and be counseled about the benefits of aspirin to reduce the risk of preeclampsia.

High Blood Pressure

Key Thing to Remember



High blood pressure is the most common reason people get heart disease, including coronary artery disease, heart failure, atrial fibrillation, stroke, dementia, chronic kidney disease and all-cause mortality.

The good news is it can be treated and even prevented by making healthy choices such as eating well, moving your body, and taking medication if it's prescribed.

Health care professionals want most adults with high blood pressure to keep their blood pressure below **130 over 80**. *They may have different goals for people who are sick, older or pregnant.*

Check with your health care professional if you have any questions.

Let's Shake It OUT!





Taking Care of Your Heart and Brain

Four Numbers You Need to Know

Blood Pressure

Less than 120/80 mmHg

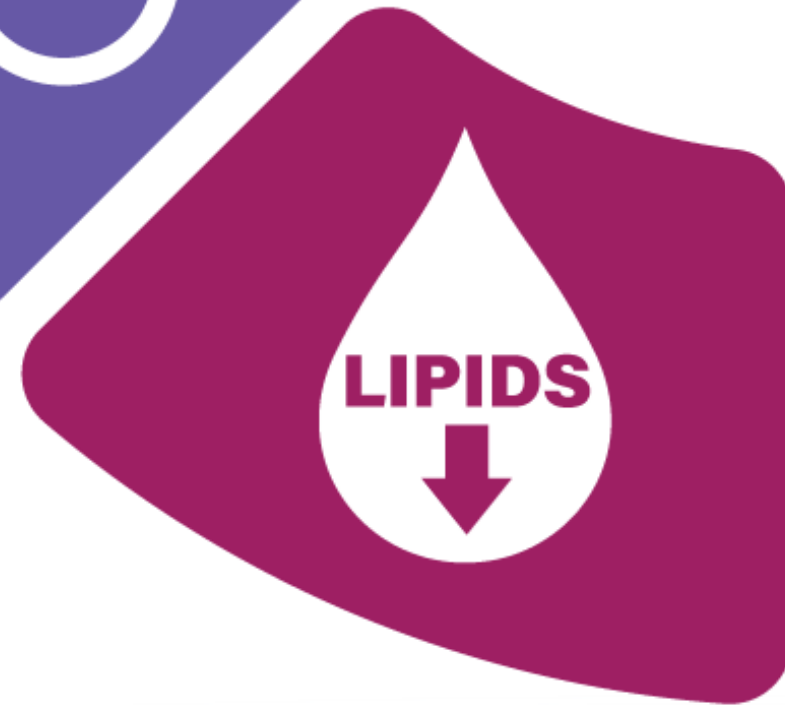


LIPIDS



Blood Lipids

Less than 130 mg/dL of non-HDL cholesterol



Healthy Weight

A body mass index of less than 25



Blood Sugar

No history of diabetes and fasting blood glucose of less than 100 mg/dL (or Hemoglobin A1c < 5.7)



Four Health Behaviors You Can Do

Adequate Sleep

Getting 7-9 hours of
sleep per night



Healthy Diet

Adhering to a DASH or
Mediterranean diet



Physical Activity

150 minutes or more of
moderate or greater physical
activity per week



Not Smoking or Vaping



Let's Talk Tobacco & Nicotine



Which one of these is a risk if you smoke?

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Depression and anxiety
- Premature aging
- ✓ All of the above

Quitting Tobacco or Nicotine



Talk to your health care professional

They can be a partner in your plan and may suggest medications that can help you quit.

Commit to a quit day

Choose a day in the next week.

Cold turkey or gradual?

Decide if you will quit all at once or start cutting down.

Get prepared

Keep healthy snacks on hand and plan fun ways to fill your time when you feel the urge to smoke.

Let's Talk Sleep



How many hours of
sleep do you get?

Getting Enough Sleep

Aim for 7-9 hours every night



Dim It

Dimming the lights before sleep helps signal to your brain that it's time to wind down.



Set a Routine

Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.

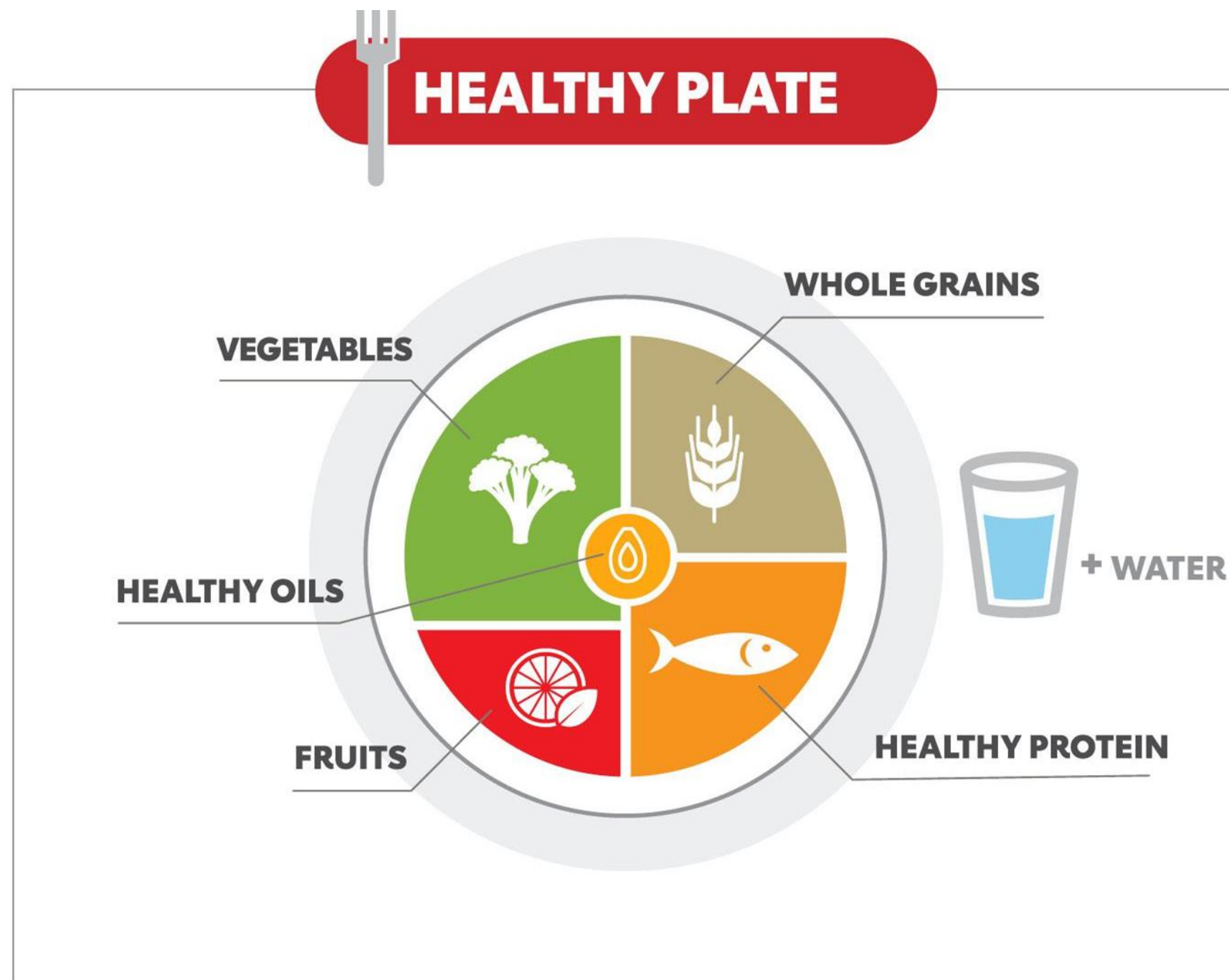
Better sleep can improve brain function, improve mood, lower the risk of chronic disease and more!

Let's Talk Food



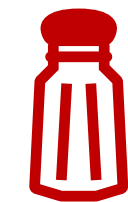
What are some easy ways to add more fruits and vegetables to meals?

Enjoying a Healthy Diet



BUILD A HEALTHY PLATE

- ½ veggies and fruits
- ¼ whole grains such as brown rice
- ¼ protein such as beans, skinless chicken or fish



REDUCE THE SALT YOU EAT

The Truth About Salt



Sodium is part of salt. Ideally, you should eat no more than $\frac{2}{3}$ of a teaspoon of salt in total for the day.

When you eat too much sodium, your body holds on to extra water to balance it out. This adds more fluid to your blood vessels, raising your blood pressure and making your heart work harder.

Too much sodium can also lower the effects of some blood pressure medications.

Potassium Salt Substitutes



In adults, potassium-based salt substitutes can help prevent or treat high blood pressure, especially for those who use salt mainly in cooking or flavoring at home. However, extra monitoring is needed for patients with chronic kidney disease or those taking medications that reduce potassium excretion.

Let's Talk Exercise



What is **moderate**
activity or **vigorous**
activity?

The Goal is to Move More



Moderate activity can include walking, dancing, gardening and even house cleaning.

Vigorous activity can include running, swimming, biking and jumping rope.

The goal is to get your heart pumping!

Aim for 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity **or** 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity every week.

Being More Active



Exercise is great for your brain!

Moving your body regularly can make you feel happier and less stressed and helps with memory!

Start small

Start with a walk around the block at lunchtime or after dinner to help you de-stress. Continue building on it until it becomes a habit.

Change your mindset

Think outside the gym! Playing with kids, dancing, gardening and mall walking all count!

Additional Movement Ideas



For adults with or without high blood pressure, in addition to lifestyle changes or medication, other forms of stress management that may help prevent or treat elevated or high blood pressure include:

- Breathing control techniques
- Yoga
- Transcendental meditation

Don't Forget



1. Controlling your blood pressure is the best way to keep your heart and brain healthy.
2. Most people with high blood pressure don't have symptoms.
3. Talk to your health care professional if you have any risk factors.
4. Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80.
5. You have the power to start making small changes today.

Make a Commitment



Get your blood pressure checked



Which small change will you start this week?

- Take a walk after dinner
- Set a bedtime alarm
- Add a serving of veggies

Stay In Touch



Follow us **@AmericanHeart** on social media and DM us to let us know how you're doing!

