American Heart Association.
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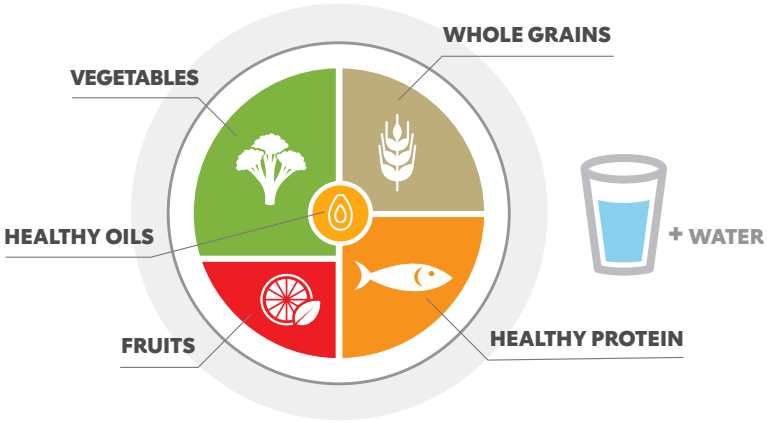
HOW TO EAT BETTER

CREATE A HEALTHY EATING PATTERN

Eat well-balanced meals throughout the day to keep your heart and brain working at their best. Don't worry about "special foods" – a variety of healthy foods is best.

HEALTHY PLATE



ENJOY vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins (like beans, lentils, nuts), lean animal proteins (like skinless poultry, fish, seafood, low-fat dairy). Drink plenty of water throughout the day, and unsweetened tea and coffee can also be enjoyed.

LIMIT sweetened drinks and alcohol. Eat less salty food, fatty foods, and processed meats. Limit foods like butter, whole milk, full-fat yogurt, and cheese. Take the skin off poultry before cooking. Use plant-based oils, such as olive, canola, or avocado oil, instead of oils like coconut or palm oil.

AVOID trans fats. Trans fats are found in some store-bought baked goods and fried foods.

READ NUTRITION LABELS

Nutrition Facts
8 servings per container
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)

Amount per serving
Calories 230

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8g	**10%**
Saturated Fat 1g	**5%**
Trans Fat 0g	

Understanding food labels can help you make healthier choices.

When you have more than one choice, compare nutrition facts. Foods with **less** sodium, bad fats (saturated and trans fats), and added sugars are better for you.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

WATCH PORTIONS

Make room for healthy portions of different food groups in your meals and snacks.

COOK AT HOME

Cooking at home can be more nutritious than eating out. Fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables are all great options. If they are canned or frozen make sure they don't have added sugars or salt. Learn healthy prep methods at heart.org/eatsmart.

LOOK FOR THE HEART-CHECK

The Heart-Check mark helps you find foods that can be part of a healthy eating plan.

IN NEED OF INSPIRATION?

The American Heart Association has hundreds of recipes at heart.org/recipes.

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HOW TO BE MORE ACTIVE

MOVE MORE

Exercise is like a workout for your heart and brain. Getting active, even just going outside for a walk, can help you feel better. It can reduce stress, improve your mood and help you feel recharged. Adults should get a weekly total of at least:

150 MINUTES of moderate aerobic activity *(walking, dancing, gardening)*

OR

75 MINUTES of vigorous aerobic activity *(running, swimming, jumping rope)*

Or a combination of both, spread throughout the week.

GET STRONGER

Try to include activities that make your muscles stronger at least twice a week. Lifting weights, squats, lunges and crunches are great examples of strength training exercises.

ADD INTENSITY

Increase time, distance, amount or effort for more benefits.

MOVE MORE AND STRETCH MORE

Take a few minutes to stretch. Whether you are standing or sitting for long periods, try to walk or move a little to help your body stay flexible and strong.

KIDS & TEENS

Kids should get at least 60 minutes of exercise every day. This includes play and structured activities.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

Exercise isn't another to-do on your list. Think of it as a moment you dedicate to yourself to help you unplug, recharge and clear your mind.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Inviting loved ones on your walk, joining a biking group in your community, or playing ball at the park with others is a great way to exercise, socialize, and re-energize!

MAKE IT A HABIT

Exercise regularly—ideally every day or at least several times a week. This helps your body get used to it. Be patient, it may take around two months before it becomes a habit so stick with it!

BOOST YOUR MIND

Exercise is great for your brain! Moving your body regularly can make you feel happier, less stressed, and helps with memory!

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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HOW TO KEEP A HEALTHY WEIGHT

STAY IN THE KNOW

Your doctor or health care team can help you figure out if your weight is healthy for your age and body. A healthy weight helps your brain and heart function better.

LEARN YOUR BMI

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number that relates your weight to your height. Optimal BMI is less than 25. Less than 18.5 is underweight. You can calculate BMI online or see your health care professional.

UNDERSTANDING CALORIES

Calories is how we talk about energy. They are the energy our body gets from foods and what we drink, which it uses for things like moving and breathing. Eating too many calories and not being active enough can lead to weight gain.

IDEAS FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

- Increase the amount of fiber you eat and the water you drink.
- Add protein to your breakfast. Protein will help you feel full for longer.
- Avoid fast food when possible.
- Read nutritional labels for nutrition and calorie content. Pay attention to the number of serving sizes in each package.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

PORTIONS MATTER

Learn about portion sizes and how much you need to eat to stay healthy.

GET ACTIVE

Stress can trick your body into feeling hungry or craving unhealthy foods. Exercise can reduce stress.

EAT SMART

Read food labels for nutrition and calorie content per serving.

GET HELP

Talk with your doctor or registered dietitian for help with managing your weight.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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HOW TO GET HEALTHY SLEEP

Getting a good night's sleep every night is vital to your heart and brain health.

ADULTS SHOULD AIM FOR AN AVERAGE OF 7-9 HOURS

Babies and kids need more depending on their age.

LEARN THE BENEFITS OF SLEEP

- **BETTER BRAIN FUNCTION** including alertness, decision-making, focus, learning, memory, reasoning and problem-solving
- **IMPROVED** mood and energy
- **STRONGER** immune system
- **HEALING** and repairing of cells, tissues and blood vessels
- **LESS RISK** of chronic disease

LEARN HOW SLEEP AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH

Sleep is an important time for your brain to reset. Regular, restful sleep is important to keep your brain running smoothly. Poor sleep may put you at higher risk for:

- Depression and anxiety
- Memory loss and dementia
- High blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol
- Obesity
- Heart disease

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Check your room

DIM IT.

Dimming the lights before sleep helps signal to your brain that it's time to wind down. Dim your screen or use a red filter app at night. The bright blue light of most devices can mess with your "internal clock" and melatonin production, a hormone that regulates sleep.

SET IT.

Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. This helps regulate your body's internal clock and makes it easier to fall asleep and wake up naturally. Set a bedtime alarm to remind you it's time to wrap it up for the night.

CREATE IT.

Establish a nighttime routine. Spend 20-30 minutes winding down before bed, such as reading, meditating, or taking a warm bath. Avoid screens.

BLOCK IT.

Put your phone on "do not disturb" mode to block it all out when you're trying to sleep.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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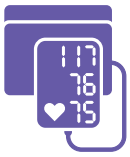
HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE

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:



117/76

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

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.

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HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD SUGAR

UNDERSTAND BLOOD GLUCOSE (Blood Sugar)

Health screenings with your doctor often include measuring how much glucose is in your blood. Healthy blood glucose is one sign that your brain, kidneys, and heart are healthy. If blood glucose is too low, you may feel tired or dizzy but feel better after you eat. High blood glucose may be related to things like dehydration or infection. But if blood glucose is too high over time, it may mean you have pre-diabetes or diabetes.

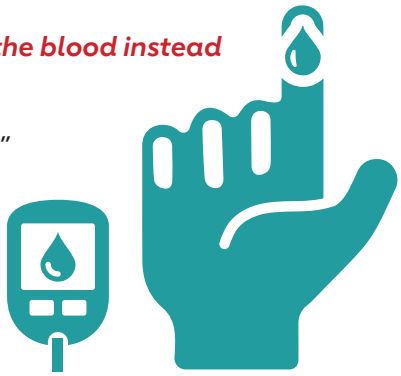
GLUCOSE

When we eat food, our body makes glucose, a type of sugar. It travels in the blood to places in the body where energy is needed. Other parts of the body need insulin to carry glucose into cells to be used as energy. Healthy people can maintain healthy blood glucose by eating smart, being physically active, managing stress, and getting healthy sleep.

In Type 2 diabetes, glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into cells because:

- The body develops "insulin resistance" and can't use its insulin efficiently.
- The pancreas slowly loses its ability to produce insulin.

The result can be a high blood sugar level.



TRACK LEVELS

Health care professionals can take blood sugar readings. If you are living with Type 2 diabetes, you may need to monitor your blood sugar level more often.

If you have diabetes visit **American Heart Association | Diabetes**.

Fasting Blood Glucose	Diagnosis	What It Means
Lower than 100 mg/dl	Normal	Healthy range
100 to 125 mg/dl	Prediabetes (impaired fasting glucose)	At increased risk of developing diabetes.
126 mg/dl or higher	Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2 diabetes)	At increased risk of heart disease or stroke.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

EAT SMART

Eat meals with lots of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts, and lean proteins like fish and seafood. Drink plenty of water. Water can help maintain healthy blood sugar levels. Limit sugary foods and drinks, red meats, processed meats, salty snacks, and foods that are highly processed.

MOVE MORE

Exercise can help lower your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. It can also help you manage diabetes if you are living with it. Exercise also improves your energy, mood, and clears your mind.

MANAGE WEIGHT

Stay at a healthy weight to help prevent, delay or manage diabetes. Speak to a health care professional to understand what is a healthy weight for you.

NO NICOTINE

Avoid smoking, vaping, nicotine pouches or using tobacco. It makes it harder to manage prediabetes and diabetes. Even being around secondhand smoke can cause problems.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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HOW TO CONTROL CHOLESTEROL

UNDERSTAND CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that comes from two sources: FOOD and your BODY.

It is only found in foods from animal sources. It travels in the body by lipoproteins (LDL and HDL)

High cholesterol can affect your heart and brain health. It can lead to heart disease and increase the risk of some types of dementia, like Alzheimer's disease.

HDL = GOOD

High-density lipoprotein is known as **"good" cholesterol.**

LDL = BAD

Low-density lipoprotein is known as **"bad" cholesterol.**

HDL helps keep LDL from sticking to artery walls. This reduces plaque buildup and lowers the risk of heart disease and stroke.

heart.org/cholesterol

TRACK LEVELS

A health care professional can check your cholesterol with a simple blood test and explain what it means for your health.

Keep track of your cholesterol numbers. If you have high cholesterol, take steps to reduce it.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

EAT SMART

Eat meals with lots of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts, and lean proteins like fish and seafood. Limit sugary foods and drinks, red meats, processed meats, salty snacks, and foods that are highly processed.

MOVE MORE

Exercise can help lower cholesterol numbers. It can also improve your mood and clear your mind.

KNOW YOUR FATS

The fats you eat can affect your cholesterol numbers. Replace saturated fats like butter and whole dairy products with healthy fats. Healthy fats include olive oil, fatty fish, nuts and eggs.

NO NICOTINE

Smoking lowers good HDL cholesterol. It also increases your risk of heart disease and affects your brain health.

TAKE MEDICATION AS DIRECTED

Taking your medicine is important. Medicines like statins, or others, can help you control your cholesterol numbers.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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HOW TO QUIT TOBACCO AND NICOTINE PRODUCTS

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EDUCATE YOURSELF

The first step to quitting tobacco/ nicotine products is to understand the risks and health effects for you and your family.

- **Heart Disease:** Nicotine and tobacco can raise blood pressure and increase heart rate. It can cause blood vessels to narrow, increasing the risk of heart attacks.
- **Stroke:** Nicotine and tobacco can damage blood vessels. It can increase the risk of having a stroke by causing blood clots or blocking blood flow to the brain.
- **Diabetes:** Nicotine and tobacco can increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. For people with diabetes, it can also make it harder to manage blood sugar levels.
- **Cancer:** Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer.
- **Depression and Anxiety:** Nicotine and tobacco can lead to mood swings and heightened anxiety when their effects wear off.
- **Premature Aging:** Smoking can cause memory problems and dementia later in life and premature skin damage, like wrinkles.

MAKE A PLAN TO QUIT

You're more likely to quit tobacco for good if you prepare. Start by creating a plan that fits your lifestyle.

SET a quit date within the next 7 days. It's best to pick a weekday that doesn't look like it will be too stressful.

CHOOSE a method: cold turkey or gradually.

DECIDE if you need help from a health care professional, nicotine replacement or medicine.

PREPARE for your quit day by planning how to deal with cravings and urges.

QUIT on your quit day.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

DEAL WITH URGES

When you feel the urge to smoke, vape or use nicotine, tell yourself to wait for 10-15 minutes. Often, cravings pass in a short amount of time, and you'll feel better once the urge is gone. Keep your hands and mouth busy. Try chewing gum, drinking water, or squeezing a stress ball. Take it one day at a time. Quitting is tough, and it's normal to have cravings.

LEARN YOUR TRIGGERS

Recognize what makes you want to smoke, vape or use nicotine. This can include things like stress, certain places, or social situations. Try to avoid or manage these triggers, especially at the beginning. Practice deep breathing exercises to help calm your body and mind.

GET SUPPORT

A buddy system or support program can help you with some of the common struggles of quitting. Call 1-800-QuitNow (784-8669) today. This is a free phone service that helps people quit smoking. When you call, you'll talk to a counselor who gives you advice, tips, and support to stop smoking.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8