

# In Sound Health

## Heart Health Starts Here: Understanding and Managing High Blood Pressure

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# Heart Health Starts Here: Understanding and Managing High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, or hypertension, means your blood is pushing too hard against your artery walls. Many people have it without knowing because it usually causes no symptoms. Left untreated, it can lead to serious problems like heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, and even dementia. The good news? Early diagnosis and treatment can protect your heart and arteries for years to come.

## What is Hypertension?

When your blood pressure is too high, your heart needs to work harder to pump blood. Over time, this extra strain can damage your arteries and heart.

MARCH 2026

## Spring Into Health

With longer days and the change in seasons, spring is a great time to refresh your routines and focus on your health.

In this issue of *In Sound Health*, support your heart health by learning about high blood pressure, and discover ways you can help create a culture of wellness as part of the Wellness Volunteer Network. Fuel your nutrition knowledge with digital resources, and try a quick, flavorful weeknight dinner with a Chicken & Spinach Skillet Pasta recipe. Stay active and engaged with our Spring Healthy Habits Bingo challenge, learn how to find an in-network provider, and step into spring with local events that get you moving—and smiling.

Whatever this season brings, Sound Support programs are here to help you and your family thrive, one healthy habit at a time.



Systolic

Diastolic

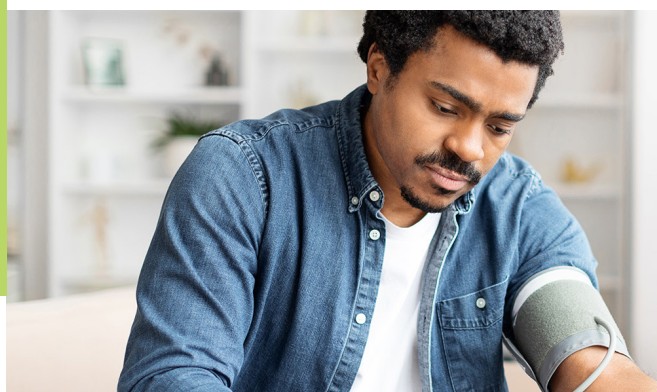
Blood pressure is measured with two numbers: the top number (**SYSTOLIC PRESSURE**) measures the force when your heart beats, and the bottom number (**DIASTOLIC PRESSURE**) measures the force between beats. In the U.S., high blood pressure is defined as a systolic reading of 130 or higher, or a diastolic reading of 80 or higher.

## Types and Causes

There are two main types of hypertension:

1. **Primary hypertension** is linked to age, genetics, and family history.
2. **Secondary hypertension** is caused by a medical condition, medication, or substance, such as alcohol.

Other factors that can raise your risk include being over 55, overweight or obese, physically inactive, smoking or using tobacco products, eating too much sodium, and drinking alcohol excessively.



### DID YOU KNOW?

High blood pressure affects **nearly half** of all adults in the U.S.

## Symptoms and Complications

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, earning it the nickname “silent killer.” However, untreated hypertension can lead to serious complications, including heart attack, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, cognitive decline or dementia, and eye damage.

**! In some cases, extremely high blood pressure can trigger a hypertensive emergency.**


Seek immediate medical attention by calling 911 if your blood pressure reaches 180/120 or higher and you experience any of these symptoms:

- Chest pain
- Dizziness
- Heart palpitations
- Seizures
- Severe headache
- Signs of stroke, like sudden facial droop, slurred speech, or sudden arm/leg weakness
- Vision changes, including eye pain, vision loss, or sudden blurry vision

## Managing High Blood Pressure

Treatment often combines medication with lifestyle changes. Steps you can take include:

 Maintaining a healthy weight

 Eating a balanced, low-sodium diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains

 Staying physically active

 Quitting smoking

 Limiting alcohol

Your provider may also prescribe medications such as diuretics, ACE inhibitors, or beta-blockers.

High blood pressure usually won't make you feel sick until it's already causing damage, which is why regular check-ups, early treatment, and lifestyle changes are key to keeping your heart and arteries healthy. By monitoring your blood pressure and following your provider's guidance, you can reduce your risk of serious complications and live a longer, healthier life.

Source: [my.clevelandclinic.org](https://my.clevelandclinic.org), [mayoclinic.org](https://mayoclinic.org)



## Help Create a Culture of Health as a Part of the Wellness Volunteer Network

Share wellness tips, spread the word about Trust programs, and help your community thrive.

The Sound Support Wellness Volunteer Network (WVN) is powered by Trust participants who want to make a difference. Wellness Volunteers share information about Sound Health & Wellness Trust Sound Support programs and healthy community events across western Washington, encouraging others to get involved and explore the resources available to them.



You could earn up to \$100 in 2027 HRA funding by joining the Wellness Volunteer Network and meeting certain requirements, if eligible\*.

### Get started today!

Scan the QR code or go to [www.soundhealthwellness.com](https://www.soundhealthwellness.com) to learn more and apply.

**PPO PLAN PARTICIPANTS:**



**KAISER PLAN PARTICIPANTS:**



*\*Final earned amount depends on the other Health Related Actions you perform this year and if you complete your annual health assessment by December 31, 2026, to unlock the ability to earn any HRA funding. Must be HRA eligible on January 1, 2027.*

# Top Apps and Podcasts for Smarter Nutrition

Building healthier eating habits is easier when you have the right tools at your fingertips. From tracking calories to planning balanced meals and learning from nutrition experts, these **free** apps and podcasts can help you make informed, sustainable choices.



## Healthy Eating Apps



### Calorie & Nutrition Tracking: MyFitnessPal

A longtime favorite for food logging, MyFitnessPal features a database of more than 20 million foods. Track calories, macros, and key nutrients, and use the barcode scanner to quickly log packaged items.



### Simple Goal Setting: Start Simple with MyPlate

This USDA-backed app helps you set daily goals across major food groups. Earn badges while working toward a more balanced diet and reducing saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.



### Meal Planning: Mealime

Mealime simplifies weekly meal prep with healthy recipes that typically take 30 minutes or less. It builds customized meal plans and grocery lists, with 200+ personalization options to match your tastes and dietary needs.



### Nutrition Education & Food Quality: Fooducate

Fooducate tracks meals while grading foods (A–D) based on nutritional quality. It flags high levels of added sugars and unhealthy fats and suggests smarter alternatives to support better habits.

## Nutrition Podcasts



### Evidence-Based Nutrition: Sound Bites: A Nutrition Podcast

Registered dietitian Melissa Joy Dobbins hosts 30–60 minute episodes featuring expert guests who break down fad diets, food trends, and nutrition research into practical, fact-based guidance.



### Nutrition Science & Gut Health: ZOE Science & Nutrition

Top scientists explore the latest research on food, metabolism, and gut health, translating complex studies into clear, actionable advice for everyday life.



### Food as Medicine: The Doctor's Kitchen Podcast

Dr. Rupy Aujla shares how diet and lifestyle can support overall health, with discussions on gut health, mental wellbeing, and practical nutrition strategies.



### Intuitive Eating & Body Image: Food Psych Podcast

Christy Harrison offers a body-positive, anti-diet perspective on healing your relationship with food, practicing intuitive eating, and stepping away from diet culture.

# Spring Healthy Habits Bingo

Spring is the perfect time to refresh your routine! Use this bingo challenge to build small daily habits. Pick activities from the card and mark them off. Complete a row, column, or the full card for a “Super Bingo.” It’s simple and fun, and you can choose the habits that fit your day. By the end of the month, you’ll feel more energized, focused, and excited for the season!

Take a 15-minute walk outside	Do something kind for someone, like sending a thank you note or giving a compliment	Take 5 minutes to tidy a small area (desk, counter, or shelf)	Drink 8 glasses of water in a day
Pack a healthy lunch or snack for work	Write down 5 things you’re grateful for	Use the stairs instead of taking the elevator	Unplug (no electronic devices) at least one hour before bed
Stretch for 5–10 minutes	Connect with a friend or family member you haven’t spoken to in a while	Read a book or listen to a podcast for 15 minutes	Get at least 7–8 hours of sleep or take an energy boosting nap
Try a simple brain teaser or puzzle, like a crossword or sudoku	Limit soda and sugary drinks for one day	Do a spring-cleaning task (declutter or donate items, deep clean a room in the house)	Dedicate 10 minutes for self-reflection or meditation



## Chicken & Spinach Skillet Pasta

This garlicky, lemony chicken pasta with sautéed spinach and a sprinkle of Parmesan is a quick, easy weeknight dinner bursting with flavor. **Serves: 4**

### INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces gluten-free or whole-wheat penne pasta
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast or thighs, diced
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 teaspoons lemon zest
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/3 cup unsalted butter, cubed
- 4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- 10 cups chopped fresh spinach

### PREPARATION

1. Boil a large pot of water; add pasta and cook according to package. Reserve 1/2 cup of pasta water; drain the pasta and set aside.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken, salt and pepper, and cook for 5 to 7 minutes. Add garlic and stir until fragrant.
3. Add wine, lemon zest and lemon juice; bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Add butter and 1 tablespoon Parmesan; cook, whisking constantly, until the sauce is creamy and emulsified.
4. Add 1/4 to 1/2 cup pasta water; stir occasionally until the sauce thickens slightly, about 2 minutes.
5. Add in the spinach and pasta. Cook over medium heat until the spinach is wilted and bright green. Serve with the remaining Parmesan and enjoy!

### NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Serving size: 2 cups

**Calories: 514**      **Carbs: 25 g**      **Fat: 27 g**  
**Protein: 33 g**      **Fiber: 3 g**

Source: modified from Eating Well at eatingwell.com



# Your Health Assessment is the Key to Unlocking HRA Funding



To receive any 2027 HRA funding, you and your spouse (if married) must complete your annual Health Assessment by December 31, 2026.



The Health Assessment can now be completed anytime during the year.



Scan the QR code or visit [soundhealthwellness.com/PHA](https://soundhealthwellness.com/PHA)



## Important Numbers to Know

### PPO Plan Participants

Trust Office—Benefits, Eligibility, HRA	(206) 282-4500 or (800) 225-7620
Delta Dental PPO & Schedule Plan	(800) 554-1907
DeltaCare	(800) 650-1583
VSP (Vision Service Plan)	(800) 877-7195
WellDyneRx—for Prescription Coverage	(888) 479-2000
MCC Nurses—for Hospitalization/Health Conditions	(877) 362-9969 Option 2
MCC Nurses—for Behavioral Health	(206) 308-5632
Nurse Line	(877) 362-9969 Option 1
Health Coaching	(877) 362-9969 Option 3
Quit Tobacco Coaching	(877) 362-9969 Option 4
LiveWell Fit	(800) 225-7620 Option 2, then 5

### Kaiser Plan Participants

Trust Office—Eligibility, HRA	(206) 282-4500 or (800) 225-7620
Kaiser Permanente—Benefits, Claims Status	(888) 901-4636
Delta Dental PPO & Schedule Plan	(800) 554-1907
DeltaCare	(800) 650-1583
WellDyneRx—for Prescription Coverage	(800) 373-1568
Consulting Nurse Helpline	(800) 297-6877
Quit for Life® Tobacco Cessation	(800) 462-5327
LiveWell Fit	(800) 225-7620 Option 2, then 5
Chronic Conditions Workshops	(800) 992-2279

### PRIVACY POLICY

Your health information is completely confidential, protected by federal law, and cannot be shared with your union or your employer without your permission.

All Trust programs are provided and managed by independent service providers contracted by the Trust. The information on your health status and conditions, your medical and prescription drug claims, and the information you may provide when participating is only used to offer you programs that could help you meet your health and wellness goals.

***By law, your health information cannot be used to deny healthcare coverage.***



**SOUND HEALTH**  
& WELLNESS TRUST

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# Spring Miles, Spring Smiles

Step into spring with events that get you moving and earning.

The Trust reimburses registration fees for up to four approved LiveWell Fit events each year, making it easy to turn fitness into savings. Run, walk, or cycle to stay active and earn HRA funding. Plus, bring an eligible Trust participant to their first event, and you'll both be entered to win a \$300 VISA gift card.



Earn funds for your HRA with LiveWell Fit. See the full list for details.

This newsletter provides a general overview of plan benefits. Please refer to your Plan Booklet for specifics about covered expenses as well as exclusions and limitations. The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your healthcare providers, not to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

DATE	EVENT NAME & DESCRIPTION	
<b>MARCH</b>		
21	Federal Way	<b>Dash Point Trail Run</b> — 13.1 or 6.2 mile trail run/walk and kids run
22	Seattle	<b>Big Climb Seattle</b> — 1 mile stair climb
22	Spokane	<b>Rapid Rabbit Run</b> — 5 or 3 mile run/walk
22	Vancouver	<b>Couve Clover Run</b> — 10, 7 or 3 mile run/walk and kids run
22	Ocean Shores	<b>Dugan's Run</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk and kids run
22	Olympia	<b>Evergreen 10k</b> — 6.2 mile run/walk
28	Everson	<b>Honeywagon Runs</b> — 13.1 or 4 mile run/walk and kids run
28	Seattle	<b>Dizzy Daze</b> — 3.2 mile run/walk
28	Seattle	<b>Leif to Leif 5k</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk
29	Everett	<b>Mill Town Half, 10k &amp; 5k</b> — 13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk and kids run
29	Redmond	<b>Redmond Marathon</b> — 26.2 or 13.1 mile run/walk
29	Seattle	<b>Miles for Mamas 5k</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk
29	Puyallup	<b>Daffodil 8k</b> — 4.97 mile run/walk
<b>APRIL</b>		
4	Seattle	<b>Always Hope Easter Run</b> — 13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk and family fun run
4	Seattle	<b>The Tenacious Ten</b> — 10 or 6.2 mile run/walk and kids run
11	Blaine	<b>Birch Bay Road Race</b> — 18.6, 9.3 or 3.1 mile run/walk
11	Port Angeles	<b>OAT Run</b> — 31, 13.1 or 7.5 mile trail run/walk
11	University Place	<b>Glow Run 5k &amp; Dance</b> — 3.1 mile evening run/walk and dance
12	Spokane	<b>The Split</b> — 13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk and kids run
18	Wenatchee	<b>Wenatchee Marathon</b> — 26.2, 13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk