



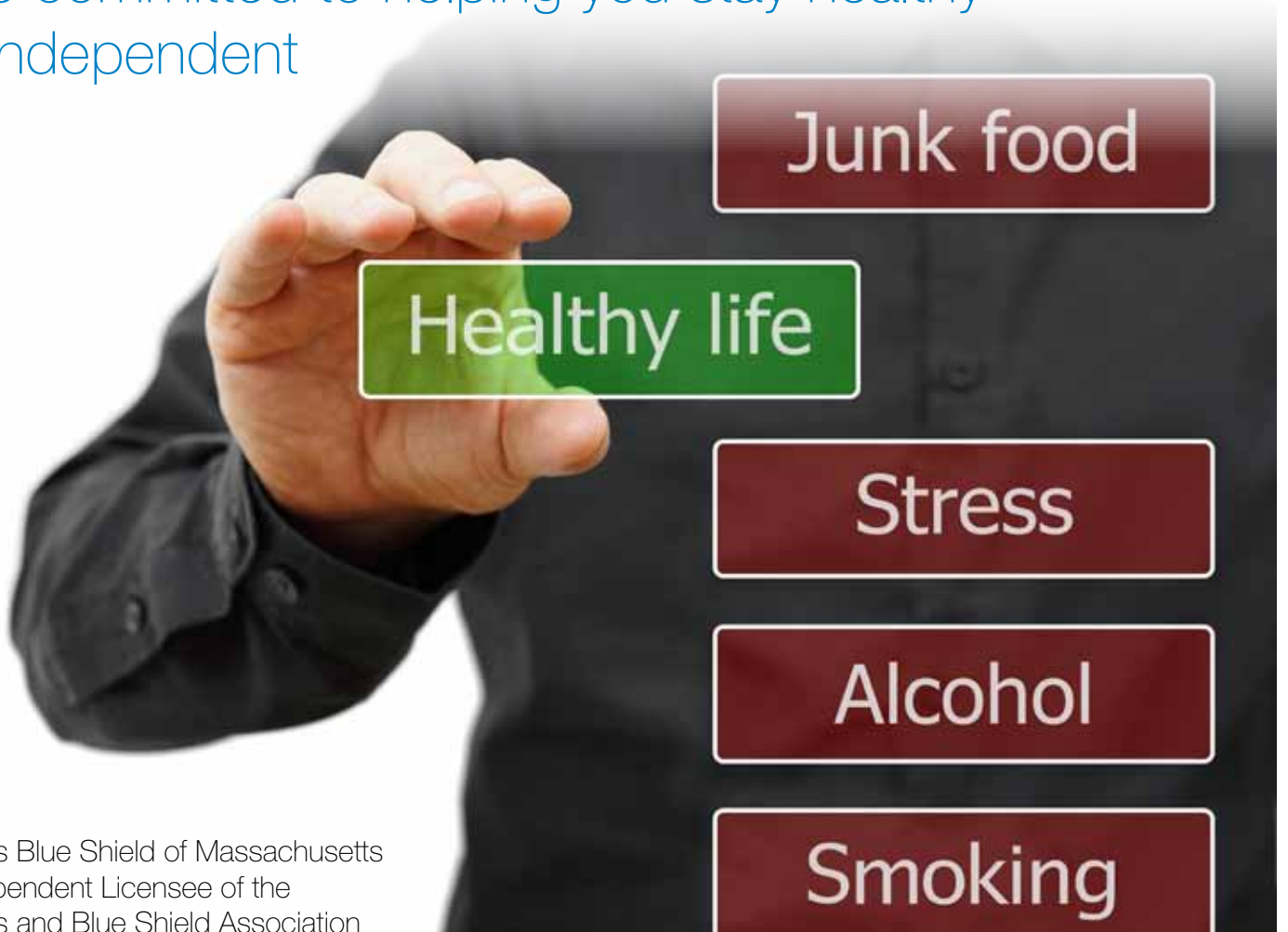
MASSACHUSETTS

Take Control of Your Health

Understand and manage your blood pressure



We're committed to helping you stay healthy and independent



Healthy life

Junk food

Stress

Alcohol

Smoking

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts is an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

You Can Control Your Blood Pressure

High blood pressure has been linked to stroke, heart disease, eye problems, and kidney failure—but when you control your blood pressure, you might prevent these problems.

With a little help from your doctor, you can take small, manageable steps to keep your blood pressure under control.

Next time you go in for a doctor's appointment, make a list of questions you want to ask your doctor. Start by asking your doctor what your blood pressure goal should be. Then follow these tips to help get it there.

Tackle One Goal at a Time

It can feel overwhelming to make too many changes at once. Instead, choose one goal to start working on. Once you feel good about that one, start working on another. It's important to talk with your doctor before making any changes to your diet or exercise routine. Here are some goals you might aim for:

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Ask your doctor what weight is healthy for you.
- **Get moving.** Experts recommend 30 minutes of exercise (e.g., brisk walking) five days a week.
- **Eat a healthy, low-salt diet.** One diet you might try is the DASH eating plan. See the next page for more information.
- **Get a good night's sleep.** Aim to get about seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
- **If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.** Experts recommend men have no more than two alcoholic drinks a day, and women have no more than one.
- **If you smoke, make a plan to quit.** Ask your doctor if you need help.

Take Your Medicines

Medicines also help control your blood pressure. If you take medicines, be sure to closely follow your doctor's instructions. Here are some ways to help you get the most out of your medicines:

- If you have trouble with **side effects**, tell your doctor. He or she can help you work through any problems. Never stop taking medicines on your own.
- Set up a system to **remind yourself** to take your medicines. For example, use a weekly pillbox and set up mail-order delivery for refills.
- If you also have diabetes, ask your doctor about **ACE** and **ARB** medicines. These are often used to treat high blood pressure in people who have diabetes.

If you have any questions about your blood pressure or medicines, talk with your doctor and use the enclosed blood pressure tracker to help you control your blood pressure.

Adapted from Million Hearts[®] at <http://millionhearts.hhs.gov>

Lower Your Blood Pressure with DASH

Looking to lower your blood pressure? The **Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH)** eating plan can help lower blood pressure and reduce your risk for heart disease.

What is the DASH eating plan?

- It is rich in fruits, vegetables, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- It includes whole grains, fish, poultry, beans, seeds, vegetable oils and nuts.
- It limits red meats, sodium, sugary drinks, and sweets.

This heart-healthy way of eating is also lower in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol.

Getting Started with DASH

It is easy to follow. There is no need to eat special foods or make complex recipes. You just eat a certain number of daily servings from various food groups. The number of servings depends on the number of calories you're allowed each day. Your calorie level depends on your age and how active you are. Be sure to talk with your doctor before making any changes to your diet.

Here are some tips to get you started. Make these changes over a couple of days or weeks and build them into your daily routine:

Include fruits and vegetables.

- Add a serving of vegetables at lunch one day and dinner the next. You can also add fruit at one meal or as a snack.
- Use fresh, frozen, or low-sodium canned vegetables and fruits.
- Aim for 2 ½–3 cups of veggies per day and 1 ½–2 cups of fruit per day.

Drink your milk. Have 3 servings or 3 cups of fat-free or low-fat milk products a day.

Limit meats. Aim to have 6 ounces a day of lean meat—or 3 ounces each portion. A 3-ounce portion is about the size of a deck of cards. If you often eat large portions of meat, cut them back over a couple of days.

Go vegetarian. Include two or more meatless meals each week.

Add some fiber. Increase servings of vegetables, brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, and cooked dry beans.

Choose snacks and desserts wisely.

- Make sure these foods are low in fat, cholesterol, salt, sugar, and calories.
- Good choices include fruit, raw vegetables, unsalted nuts or seeds, raisins, graham crackers, fat-free or low-fat yogurt, and popcorn with no salt or butter added.

To learn more about the DASH eating plan, visit the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) website at www.nhlbi.nih.gov. Or you can order information from the NHLBI Health Information Center at **301-592-8573** (TTY: **240-629-3255**).

