



Your HEALTH

Eye On Blood Pressure

Your blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against your blood vessel walls. When you have high blood pressure, the pressure in your arteries is elevated.

One in four adults, about 50 million Americans, have high blood pressure. When untreated, it can increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

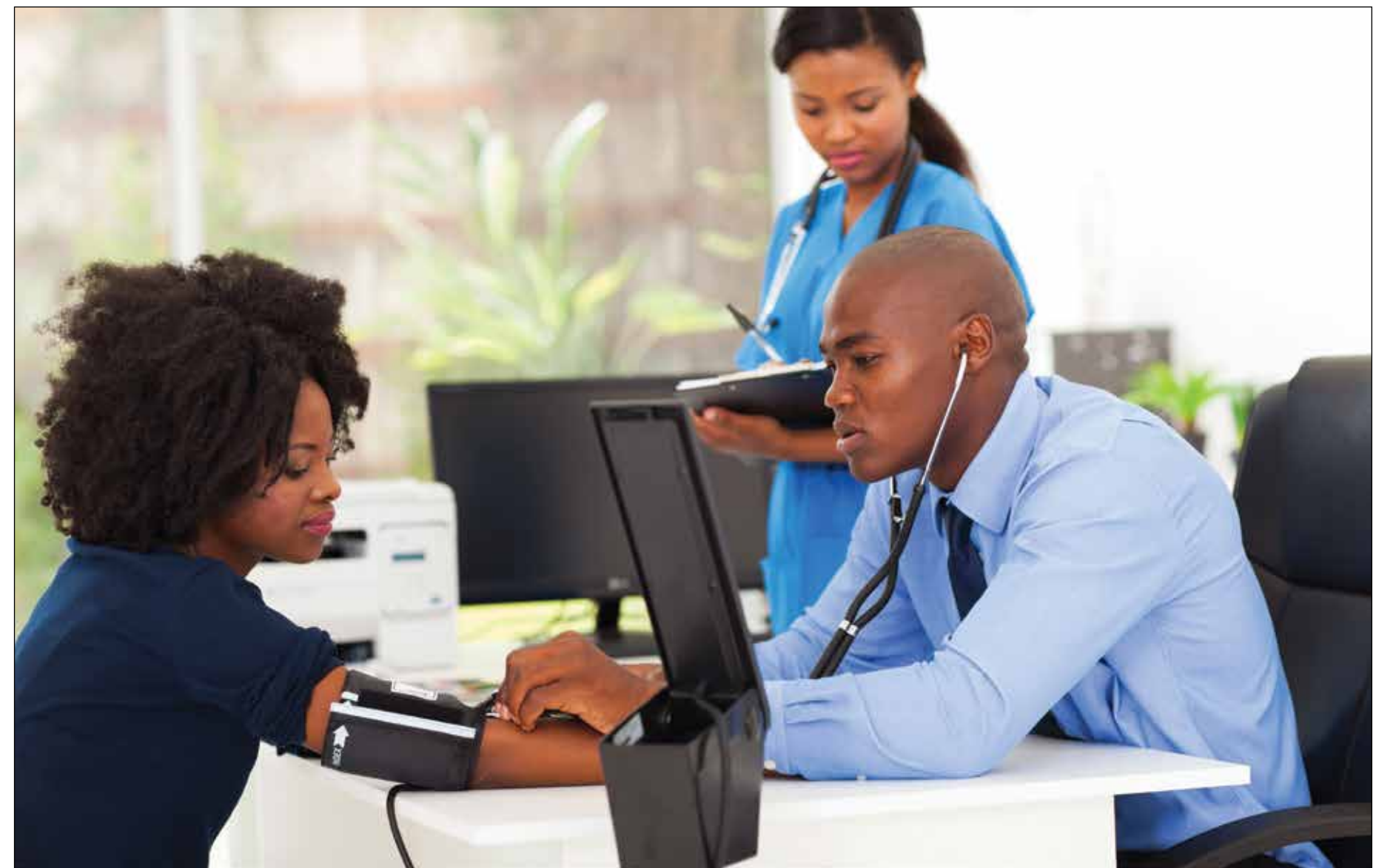
THE RISK FACTORS

Those at a greater risk for high blood pressure include people with relatives that have high blood pressure; African Americans; people over the age of 35; overweight people; people who aren't physically active; people who use too much salt; people who drink too much alcohol; people with diabetes, gout and kidney disease; pregnant women; women who take birth control pills who are overweight, had high blood pressure during pregnancy, have a family history of high blood pressure or have mild kidney disease.

AVOIDING THE PROBLEM

So how can you avoid high blood pressure? Take steps to live a healthier life and you'll greatly improve your odds of having high blood pressure later in life.

The Red Cross recommends anyone at risk lose weight if they are overweight; eat healthy meals low in saturated fat, cholesterol and salt; limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women



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or two drinks a day for men; be more physically active; take medicine the way your doctor tells you; know what your blood pressure should be and work to keep it at that level, and talk to your doctor about taking medication.

MAKE CHANGES

Whether you have been diagnosed with high blood pressure — also called hypertension — or are concerned because you have some of the risk factors for the disease, understand this: While there

is no cure, high blood pressure is manageable.

The American Heart Association notes that lifestyle modifications are essential. These changes may reduce your blood pressure without the use of prescrip-

tion medications. Adopting a healthy lifestyle is critical for the prevention of HBP and an indispensable part of managing it. Think of these changes as a “lifestyle prescription” and make every effort to comply.

The Effects of Obesity

Obesity is a growing health threat in our country, though there are some steps you can take to avoid it.

The National Health, Lung and Blood Institute recommends following a healthy eating plan and making healthy food choices while also keeping tabs on how many calories you consume. Another major factor: portion size. Watch the portion sizes in fast food and other restaurant meals. The portions served often are enough for two or three people. Children's portion sizes should be smaller than those for adults.

Another recurring theme: Be active. Make personal and family time active. Find activities that everyone will enjoy. For example, go for a brisk walk, bike or rollerblade, or train together for a walk or run. Reduce screen time. Limit the use of TVs, computers, DVDs and video games because they limit time for physical activity. Health experts recommend two hours or less a day of screen time that's not work- or homework-related.

BY THE NUMBERS

Data from 2009-2010 provided by The President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition indicates that over 78 million U.S. adults and about 12.5 million (16.9 percent) children and adolescents are obese. Recent reports project that by 2030, half of all adults (115 million adults) in the United States will be obese. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.

For children with disabilities, obesity rates are approximately 38 percent higher than for children without disabilities. It gets worse for the adult population. Obesity rates for adults with disabilities are approximately 57 percent higher than for adults without disabilities.

Statistics show obesity has skyrocketed since the 1970s, with the number of states with obese adults and children typically doubling or tripling over the past 40 years.

THE NEXT GENERATION

Nearly 45 percent of children living in poverty are overweight or obese compared with 22 percent of children living in households with incomes four times the poverty level. Almost 40 percent of black and Latino youth ages 2 to 19 are overweight or obese compared with only 29 percent of white youth. Obesity among children in the United States has remained flat — at around 17 percent — in 2003-2004 and 2011-2012.

Between 2003 and 2012, obesity among children between 2 and 5 years of age has declined from 14 percent to 8 percent — a 43 percent decrease in just under a decade.

Obesity rates in children 6 to 11 years old have decreased from 18.8 percent in 2003-2004 to 17.7 percent in 2011-2012; obesity rates for children 12 to 19 years old have increased from 17.4 percent to 20.5 percent in the same time period.

Don't Stress Out

Stress may contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease and emotional distress, according to the Red Cross.

ARE YOU STRESSED OUT?

When you're really stressed out, you're probably already aware of it — but stress also can impact you in other ways, sometimes when you don't even realize it.

According to the American Heart Association, stress can manifest in physical ways including headache; back-ache; neck ache; stomach ache; tight muscles; clenched jaw; low energy level and fitful sleep.

Stress also can manifest emotionally, with issues including anxiety; anger; depression; helplessness; feeling out of control; tension; being easily irritated and impatience.

KEEP STRESS LEVELS DOWN

Here are some tips to keep your stress levels down: If possible, stop what you are doing and take a short walk; get a drink of water or juice; take a few slow deep breaths; listen to some soothing music; do something you enjoy; watch a funny movie; exercise; learn to accept what you can't change; talk to a friend or confidant; get plenty of sleep; set realistic expectations; learn to say no; organize and prioritize.



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TRY NOT TO SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

The American Heart Association notes one of the best ways to avoid stress is to remember to laugh. Laughter makes us feel good. Don't be afraid to laugh out loud at a joke, a funny movie or a comic strip, even when you're alone.

Pacing yourself also is

important, as we need to remember to slow down. Try to “pace” instead of “race.” Plan ahead and allow enough time to get the most important things done without having to rush.

Being organized is another way to avoid stress and can help avoid situations that might stress you out. Use “to

do” lists to help you focus on your most important tasks. Approach big tasks one step at a time. For example, start by organizing just one part of your life — your car, desk, kitchen, closet, cupboard or drawer.

KEEP YOUR PERSPECTIVE

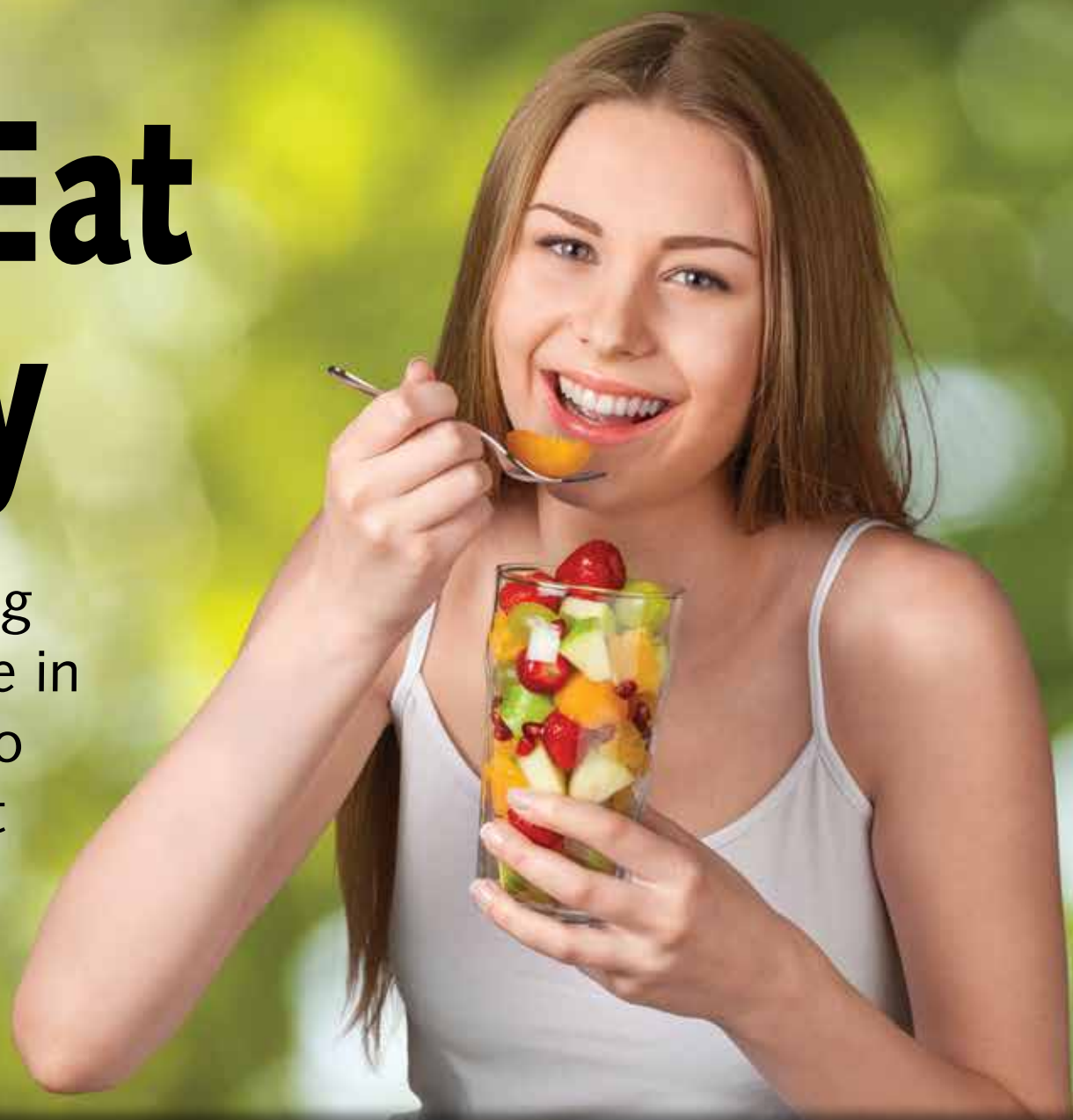
A hobby can be a great stress reliever, and there are few hob-

bies better than volunteering in your community and giving back.

Find out about the nonprofits in your community and how you might be able to help by donating your time. Helping those in need is a great stress reliever and can help give you more perspective on your own problems.

How To Eat Healthy

Exercise and remaining active play a key role in your health — but so does what you actually put into your body.



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Here are some tips from the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition that serve as a great place to start.

MAKE HALF YOUR PLATE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The council recommends choosing red, orange and dark-green vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes and broccoli, along with other vegetables for your meals. Add fruit to meals as part of main or side dishes or as dessert. The more colorful you make your plate, the more likely you are to get the vitamins, minerals and fiber your body needs to be healthy.

MAKE HALF THE GRAINS YOU EAT WHOLE GRAINS

An easy way to eat more whole grains is to switch from a refined-grain food to a whole-grain food. For example, eat whole-wheat bread instead of white bread. Read the ingredients list and choose products that list whole-grain ingredients first. Look for things like “whole wheat,” “brown rice,” “bulgur,” “buckwheat,” “oatmeal,” “rolled oats,” quinoa” or “wild rice.”

CHOOSE A VARIETY OF LEAN PROTEIN FOODS

The council notes meat, poultry, seafood, dry beans or peas, eggs,

nuts and seeds are considered part of the protein foods group. Select leaner cuts of ground beef (where the label says 90 percent lean or higher), turkey breast or chicken breast.

KEEP UP WITH YOUR SODIUM

Use the Nutrition Facts label to choose lower sodium versions of foods such as soup, bread and frozen meals. Select canned foods labeled “low sodium,” “reduced sodium” or “no salt added.”

TRADE THAT SODA FOR A BOTTLE OF WATER

The council notes you can easily cut calories by drinking water or

unsweetened beverages. Soda, energy drinks and sports drinks are a major source of added sugar and calories in American diets. Try adding a slice of lemon, lime or watermelon or a splash of 100 percent juice to your glass of water if you want some flavor.

CUT BACK THE SWEETS

The council recommends eating fewer foods that contain solid fats. The major sources for Americans are cakes, cookies and other desserts (often made with butter, margarine, or shortening); pizza; processed and fatty meats (e.g., sausages, hot dogs, bacon, ribs); and ice cream.

Staying Active

From wheelchair basketball to jogging, there are still tons of options for those with a disability to still lead an active lifestyle.

The President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition notes the benefits are myriad for those with disabilities to remain active, as it can help everything from overall physical health to emotional well-being.

THE BENEFITS

Children and adults with disabilities can gain numerous mental and physical benefits from being physically active on a regular basis, including reduced risk of chronic and secondary conditions, improved self-esteem and greater social interaction.

The council encourages everyone keep in mind that individuals with disabilities are just as capable and worthy of being active as someone without a disability, and the activity does not have to be strenuous to provide positive benefits.

BE INCLUSIVE

Look for opportunities to be active in inclusive programs already in place at your local community and recreation centers, health and fitness facilities, public agencies and park departments, or sports clubs. Having fun while being active is the key!

Find activities that you enjoy and include your friends and family in the action.

FIND WHAT FITS

The council recommends anyone looking into a new activity to always consult your personal doctor before beginning any physical activity or exercise program.

EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE ACTIVE

Here's a note from the CDC about the importance of everyone finding a way to be active:

"Having a disability does not mean a person is not healthy or that he or she cannot be healthy. Being healthy means the same thing for all of us — getting and staying well so we can lead full, active lives. That means having the tools and information to make healthy choices and knowing how to prevent illness. To be healthy, people with disabilities require health care that meets their needs as a whole person, not just as a person with a disability. Most people with or without disabilities can stay healthy by learning about and living healthy lifestyles."



Eye On Your Cholesterol

As the American Heart Association notes, high cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

THE BASICS

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that comes from two sources: your body and food, per the AHA. Your body, and especially your liver, makes all the cholesterol you need and circulates it through the blood. Cholesterol is also found in foods from animal sources, such as meat, poultry and full-fat dairy products. Your liver produces more cholesterol when you eat a diet high in saturated and trans fats.

Excess cholesterol can form plaque between layers of artery walls, making it harder for your heart to circulate blood. Plaque can break open and cause blood clots. If a clot blocks an artery that feeds the brain, it causes a stroke. If it blocks an artery that feeds the heart, it causes a heart attack.

THE TWO TYPES

There are two types of cholesterol: “good” and “bad.” Too much of one type — or not enough of another — can put you at risk for coronary heart disease, heart attack or stroke. It’s important to know the levels of cholesterol in your blood so that you and your doctor can determine the best strategy to lower your risk.

Making healthy eating choices and increasing exercise are important first steps in improving your cholesterol. For some people, cholesterol-lowering medication also may be needed to reduce the risk for heart attack and stroke. Use the information provided here to start a conversation with your doctor about how cholesterol affects your heart attack and stroke risk and



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what you can do to lower your risk.

CONNECTION TO HEART DISEASE

As your blood cholesterol rises, so does your risk of coronary heart disease. If you have other risk factors, such as smoking, high blood pressure or diabetes, this risk increases even further. The greater the level of each

risk factor, the more that factor affects your overall risk. Your cholesterol level can be affected by your age, gender, family health history and diet.

When too much LDL (bad) cholesterol circulates in the blood, it can slowly build up in the inner walls of the arteries that feed the heart and

brain, according to the AHA. Together with other substances, cholesterol can form a thick, hard deposit called plaque that can narrow the arteries and make them less flexible. This condition is known as atherosclerosis. If a clot forms and blocks a narrowed artery, a heart attack or stroke can result.

Our Bad Eating Habits

It's not much of a surprise, but it can be surprising to actually look at the numbers: Americans are eating a lot more, and a lot less healthfully, than they should be.

The President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition has assembled some statistics that show where the U.S. ranks in regards to nutrition, and shines a light on where it needs to be.

TOO MUCH

According to the council, the typical American diets exceed the recommended intake levels or limits in four categories: calories from solid fats and added sugars; refined grains; sodium; and saturated fat. To that end, most Americans also eat less than the recommended amounts of vegetables, fruits, whole-grains, dairy products and oils.

CALORIES GOING UP

The amount of food available for consumption increased in all major food categories from 1970 to 2008, while the average daily calories per person in the marketplace increased by approximately 600. Since the 1970s, the number of fast food restaurants has more than doubled. More than 23 million Americans, including 6.5 million children, also live in what the council calls "food deserts" — areas that are more than a mile away from a supermarket.

THE WORST OFFENDERS

Per the report, half of these



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empty calories come from six sources: soda, fruit drinks, dairy desserts, grain desserts, pizza and whole milk. U.S. adults consume an average of 3,400 mg/day [of sodium], well above the federal guideline of less than 2,300 mg daily.

U.S. per capita consumption

of total fat increased from approximately 57 pounds in 1980 to 78 pounds in 2009 with the highest consumption being 85 pounds in 2005. The U.S. percentage of food-insecure households, those with limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially

acceptable ways, rose from 11 percent to 15 percent between 2005 and 2009.

STATES DOING WELL, DOING THE WORST

In 2013, residents of the following states were most likely to report eating at least five

servings of vegetables four or more days per week: Vermont (68.7%), Montana (63.0%) and Washington (61.8%). The least likely were Oklahoma (52.3%), Louisiana (53.3%) and Missouri (53.8%). The national average for regular produce consumption is 57.7%.