

Cardiovascular Health: A Guide for New Immigrants in New Jersey

February 2025

Abstract

This brochure aims to educate new immigrants in New Jersey about the prevention of cardiovascular diseases. By providing recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Health Service (NHS) along with practical explanations, we hope to empower individuals to take charge of their heart health. Understanding the risk factors and adopting healthier lifestyle choices can significantly reduce the incidence of cardiovascular diseases in our community.

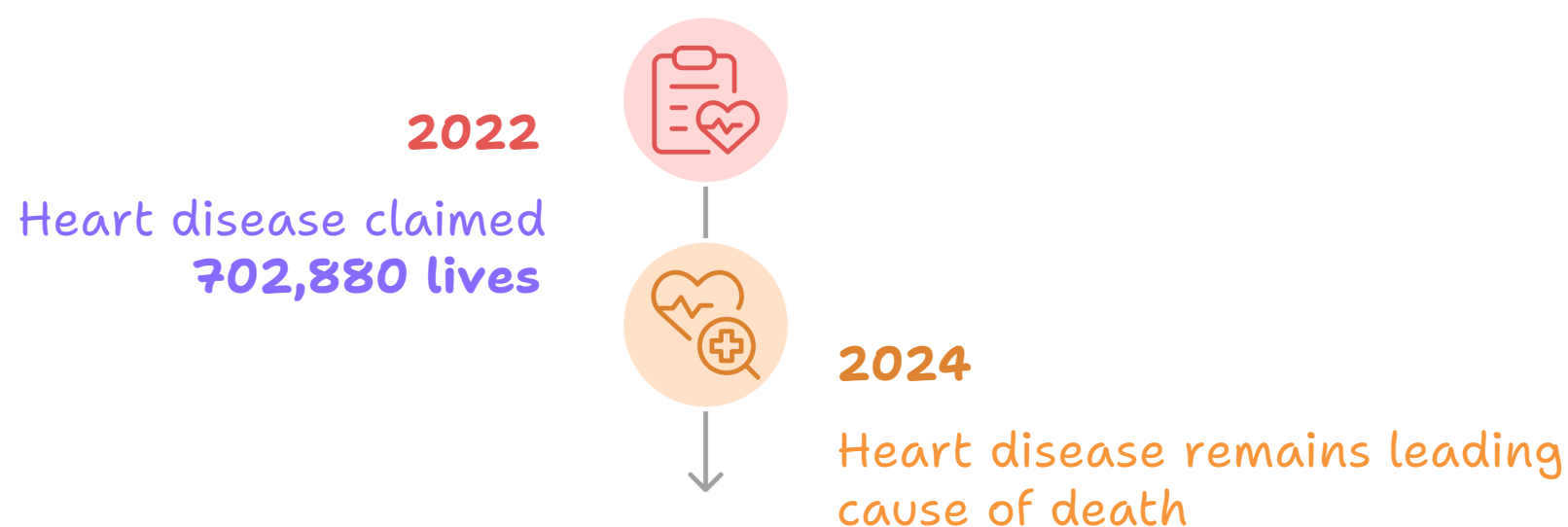
Facts:

Heart Disease: A Silent but Preventable Killer

Imagine a clock ticking—**every 33 seconds, someone loses their life to heart disease**. This means that by the time you finish reading this paragraph, another life will be lost to this silent killer.

Heart disease remains the **leading cause of death** across genders and most racial and ethnic groups (CDC, 2024). In **2022**, it claimed **702,880 lives**, accounting for **one in five deaths**. While alarming, heart disease is largely preventable through healthy lifestyle choices and regular check-ups. These numbers are alarming, but the good news is that **many cases of heart disease are preventable**. By making heart-healthy choices—such as maintaining a balanced diet, exercising regularly, managing stress, and getting routine check-ups—we can reduce these risks and save lives. Let's take action today!

Combating Heart Disease: A Timeline of Awareness and Action



What is Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)?

Think of your blood vessels as **pipes** that deliver oxygen and nutrients throughout your body. **Cardiovascular disease (CVD)** happens when these pipes become **clogged with fatty deposits (atherosclerosis)**, restricting blood flow and increasing the risk of dangerous blockages (blood clots). Just like clogged plumbing can cause leaks or bursts, blocked arteries **can lead to heart attacks, strokes, and organ damage** in the **brain, kidneys, and eyes**.

Understanding Cardiovascular Disease

What happens when blood vessels become clogged?

Cardiovascular disease occurs when blood vessels are clogged with fatty deposits, restricting blood flow and increasing the risk of blood clots.

What can blocked arteries lead to?

Blocked arteries can lead to heart attacks, strokes, and organ damage in the brain, kidneys, and eyes.

How can I prevent buildup in my blood vessels?

You can prevent buildup by staying active, eating heart-healthy foods, and managing stress.



What Every New Immigrant Should Know

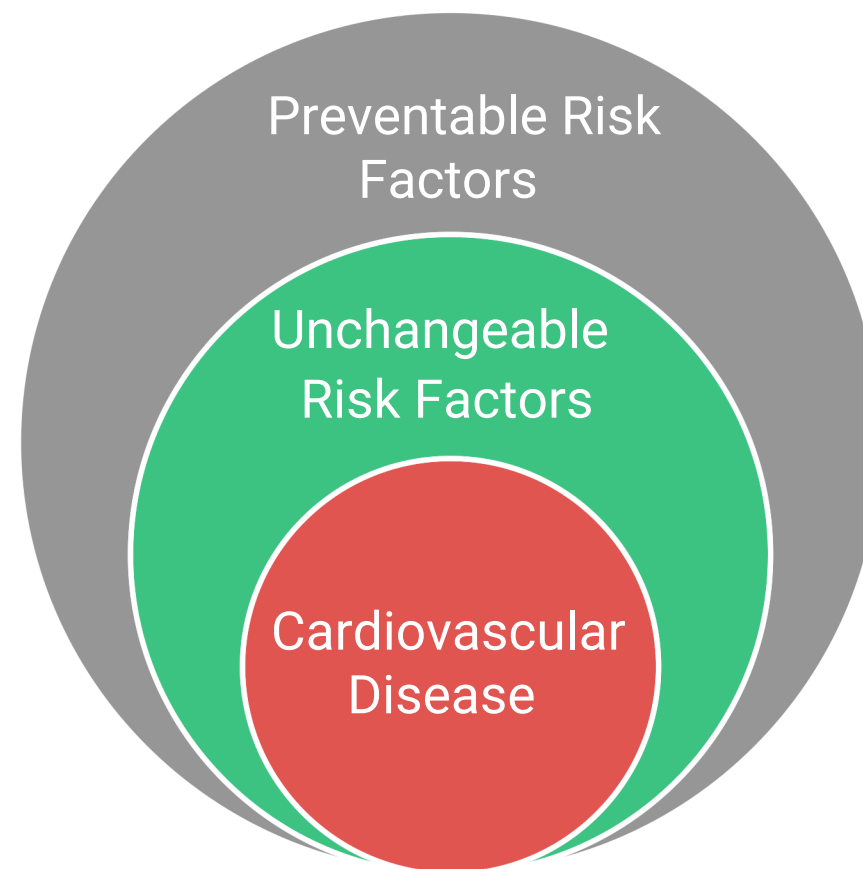
Cardiovascular disease doesn't happen overnight—it develops over time due to risk factors that affect your heart and blood vessels. Some, like age and family history, can't be changed, but many can be prevented with healthy choices.

Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors

Factors that can be managed

Factors that cannot be altered

The ultimate health outcome




Common Risk Factors:

- **High Blood Pressure (The Silent Killer):** Damages arteries without warning signs—only a blood pressure check can detect it.
- **High Cholesterol:** Too much "bad" LDL cholesterol clogs arteries, increasing heart attack risk.
- **Diabetes:** Uncontrolled blood sugar weakens blood vessels and raises heart disease risk.
- **Obesity & Poor Diet:** Excess weight, unhealthy fats, and too much salt can lead to high blood pressure and cholesterol.
- **Lack of Exercise:** Physical inactivity contributes to weight gain, high blood pressure, and poor heart health.
- **Smoking & Alcohol:** Tobacco damages arteries, while excessive drinking raises blood pressure and harmful fat levels.




High Blood Pressure

Damages arteries without warning signs.




High Cholesterol

Too much LDL cholesterol clogs arteries.




Diabetes

Uncontrolled blood sugar weakens blood vessels.



Obesity & Poor Diet

Excess weight and unhealthy fats increase risks.



Lack of Exercise

Physical inactivity contributes to various health issues.



Smoking & Alcohol

Tobacco and excessive drinking harm heart health.

Who's at Higher Risk?

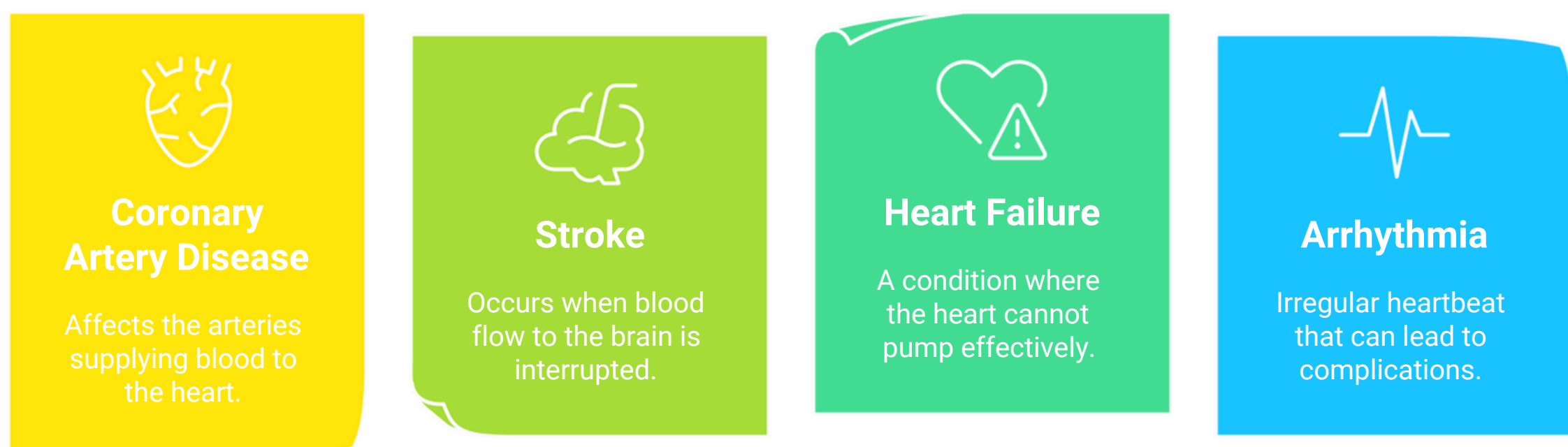
Heart Disease Risk Factors



Types of Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)

Cardiovascular disease comes in many forms, but the National Health Service (NHS) underscores four major types that stand out due to their impact on heart and circulatory health.

Major types of cardiovascular disease

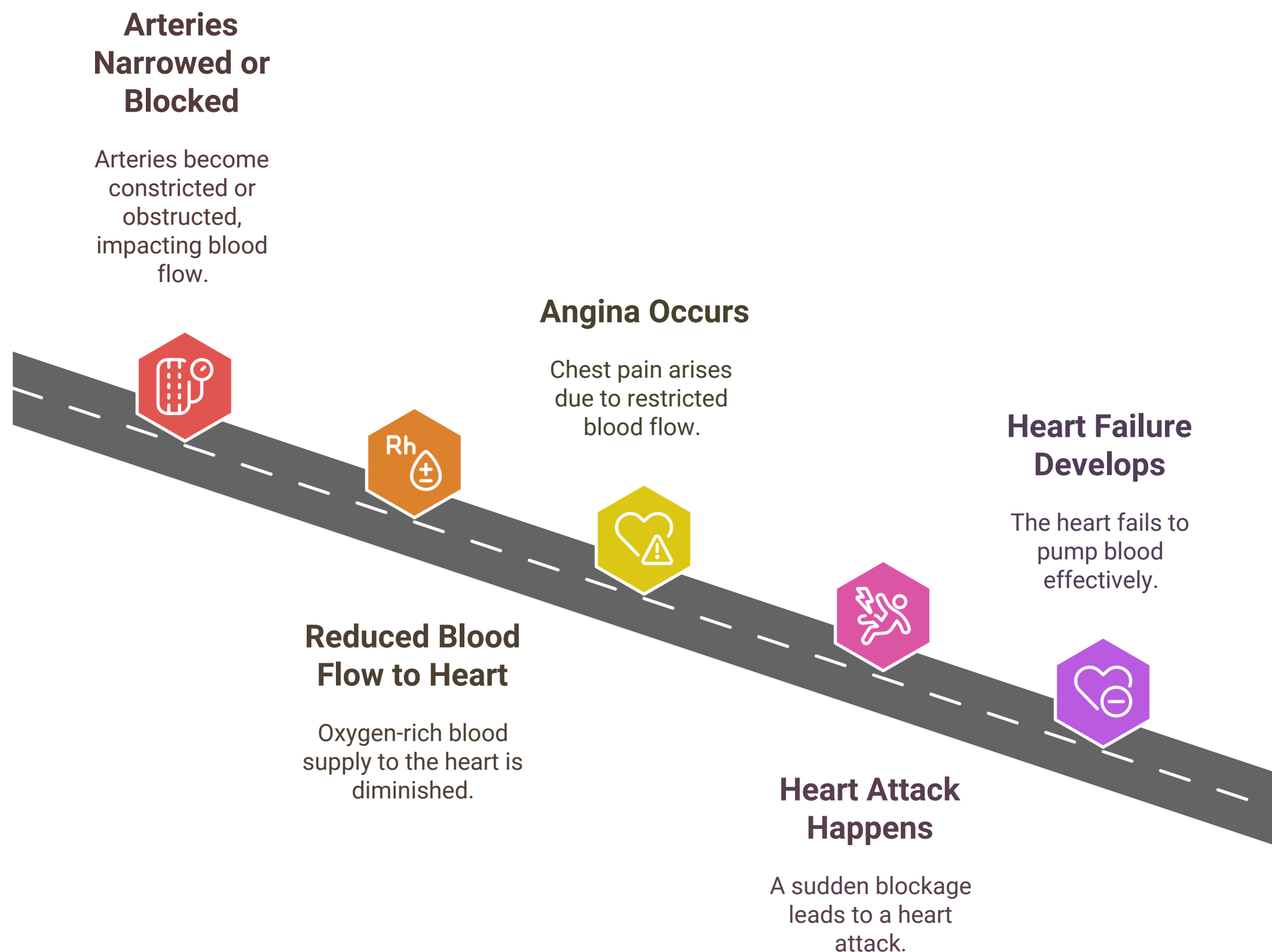


1. Coronary Heart Disease – When the Heart's Lifeline is Blocked

Imagine your heart as an engine that powers your body, and the arteries supplying it with oxygen-rich blood as fuel lines. When these arteries become narrowed or blocked, the heart struggles to function properly, leading to:

- **Angina** – Chest pain caused by restricted blood flow.
- **Heart Attack** – A sudden blockage that cuts off blood supply to the heart muscle.
- **Heart Failure** – The heart weakens and struggles to pump blood effectively.

Heart Function Impairment Sequence

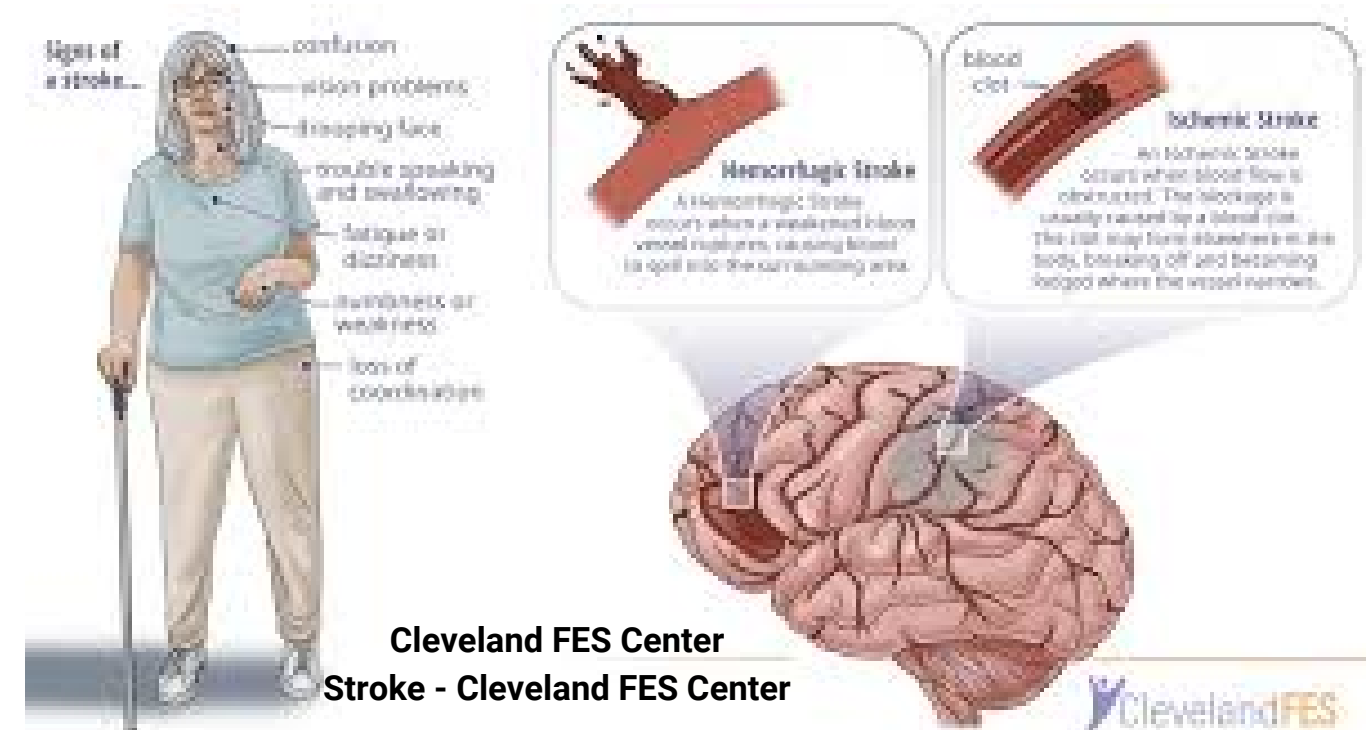


2. Strokes & Mini-Stroke (TIAs) – When the Brain’s Blood Supply is Cut Off

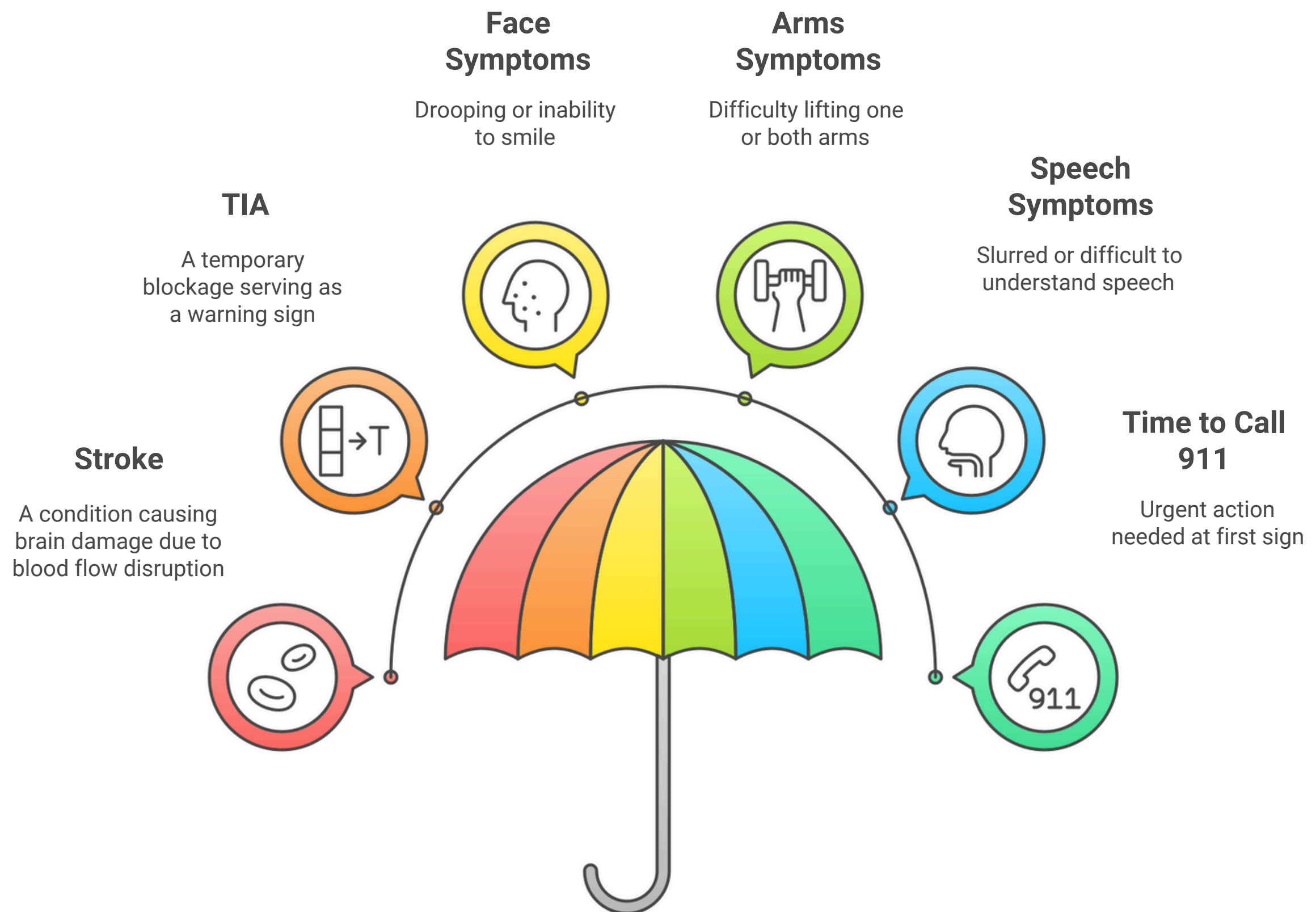
Think of your brain as a high-tech control center that depends on constant blood flow to function. A stroke occurs when a blockage or bleed disrupts this flow, leading to potential brain damage or even death.

A transient ischemic attack (TIA) or “mini-stroke” is a temporary blockage with no lasting damage, but it serves as a warning sign.

- **F (Face)** – Drooping on one side, unable to smile.
- **A (Arms)** – Difficulty lifting one or both arms.
- **S (Speech)** – Slurred or difficult to understand.
- **T (Time)** – Call 911 immediately if you notice these signs.



Understanding Strokes and TIAs



3. Peripheral Arterial Disease – Clogged Arteries in the Limbs

Picture your legs arteries as roadways carrying blood to keep your muscles moving. When plaque buildup blocks these arteries, blood struggles to reach your limbs, leading to:

- **Leg pain or cramps** that worsen with movement.
- **Numbness, weakness, or hair loss** on legs and feet.
- **Persistent ulcers** (open sores) on the feet that don't heal properly.

Consequences of Plaque Buildup in Arteries

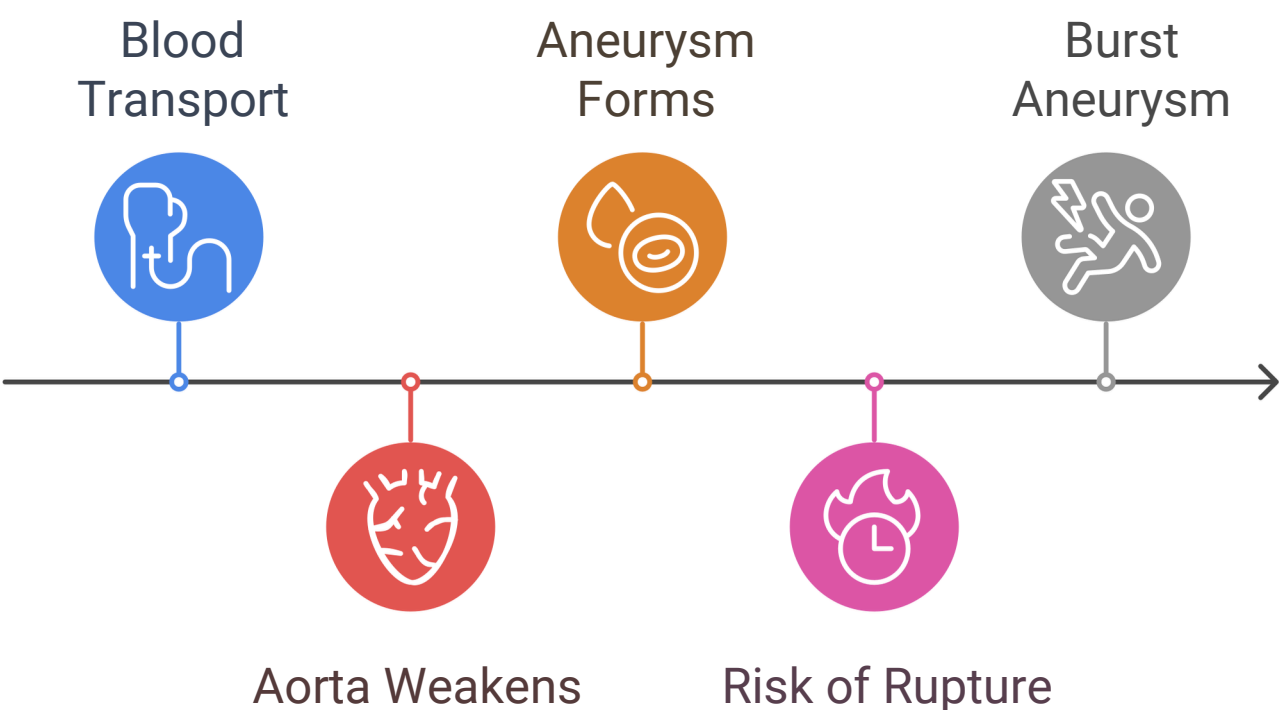


4. Aortic Disease – Weakening of the Body’s Largest Artery

The **aorta** is the body’s superhighway, transporting blood from the heart to the rest of the body. In some cases, it can **weaken and bulge (aortic aneurysm)**, creating a silent but serious risk.

- **A ticking time bomb:** Often symptomless, but if the aneurysm bursts, it can cause life-threatening bleeding.

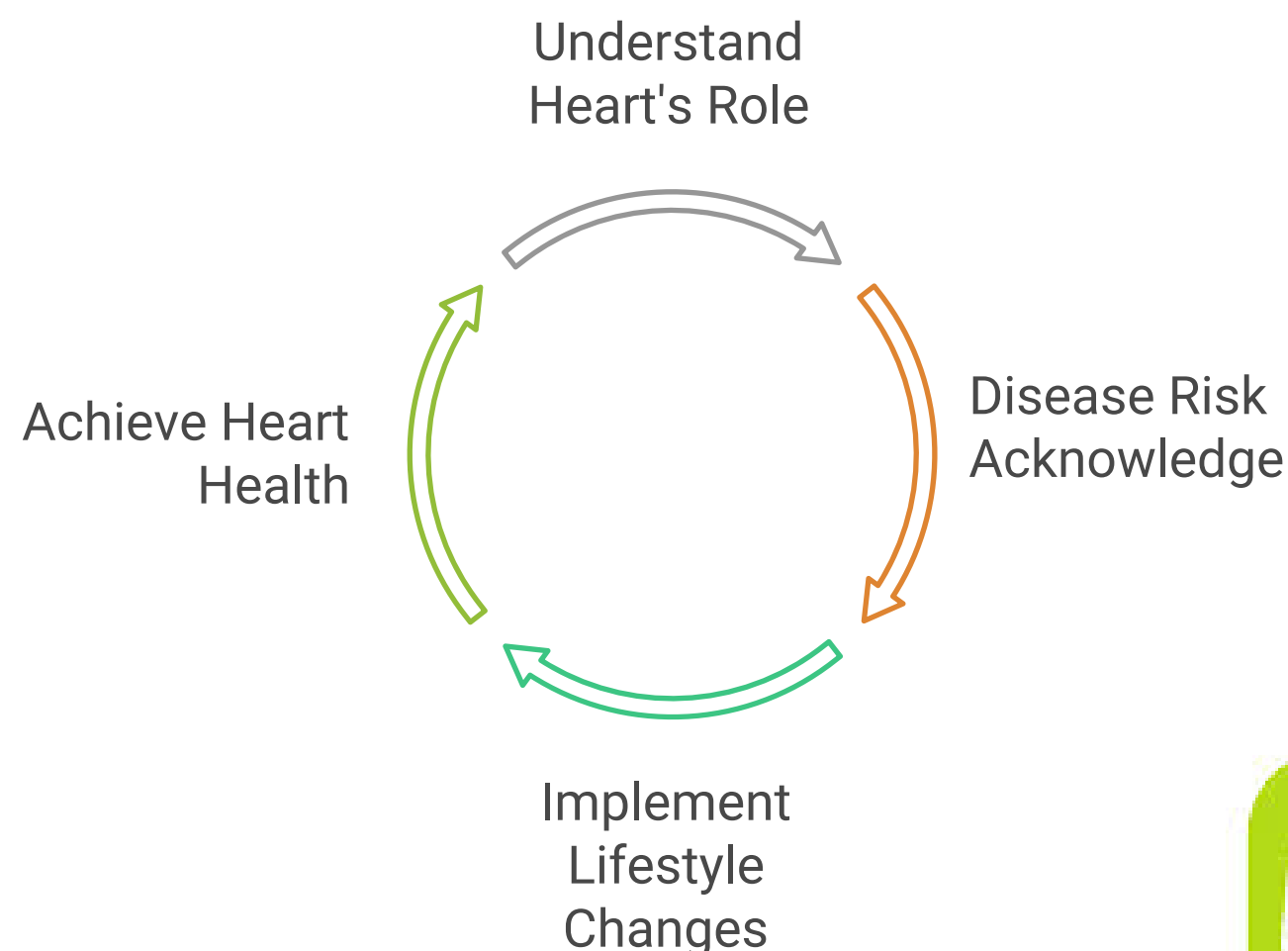
Aortic Aneurysm Risk Sequence



Keeping Your Heart Healthy: A Guide for Immigrants

Your heart is your body's engine, and just like any engine, it needs proper care to run smoothly. Heart disease is a major health concern, but the good news is that **it's preventable!** By making simple lifestyle changes, you can protect your heart and live a long, healthy life.

Cycle of Heart Health Maintenance

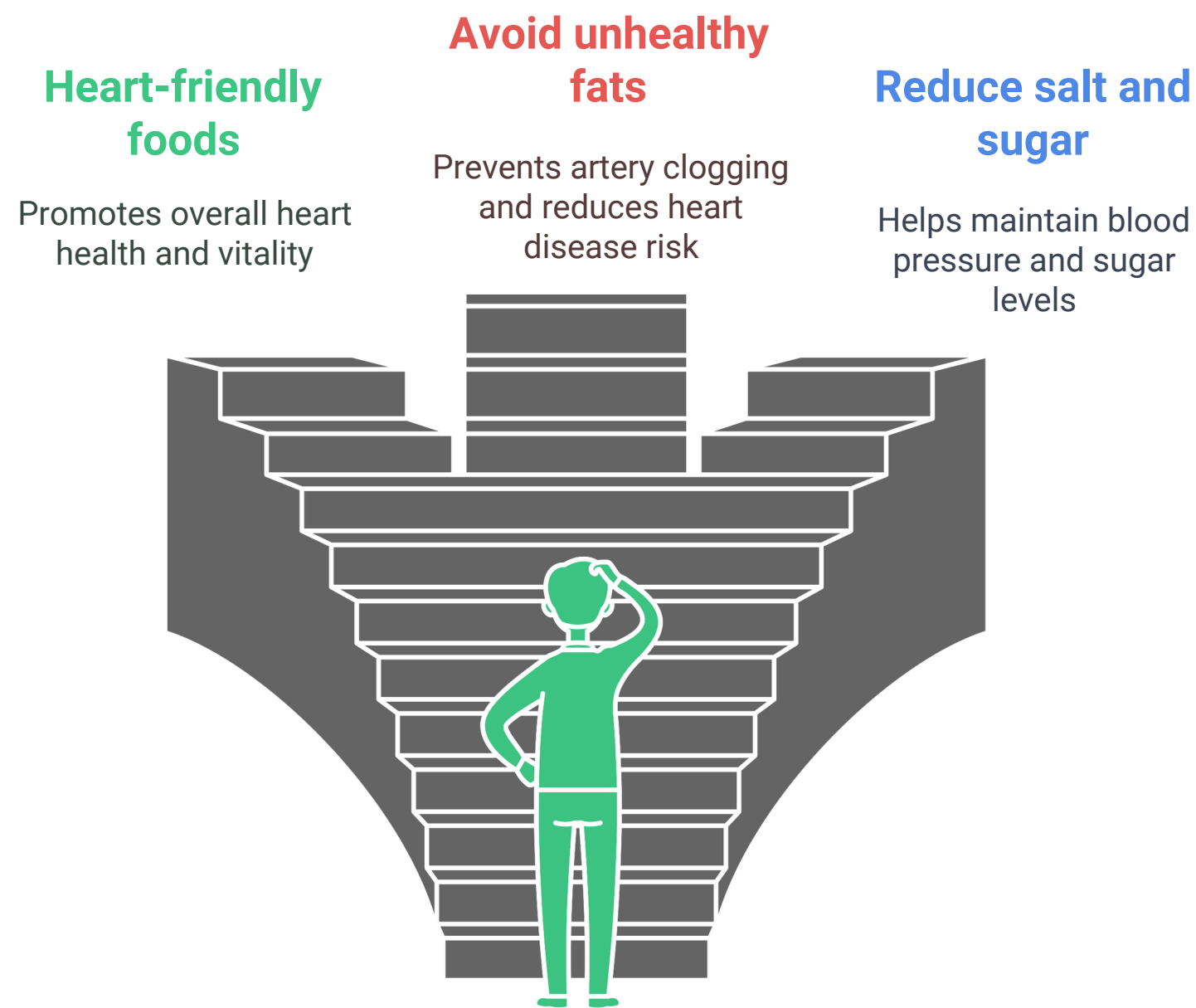


Healthy Habits for a Strong Heart

1. Eat Smart, Live Longer

- **Choose heart-friendly foods** like fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- **Avoid unhealthy fats** found in fried foods, processed snacks, and fatty meats—these clog your arteries.
- **Cut back on salt and Sugar:**
 - **Salt:** no more than 1 teaspoon/2.3 g of sodium per day
 - **sugar:** zero added sugar for children under 2 years old and less than 10% of total daily calories for people above 2 years old to keep your blood pressure and blood sugar in check.

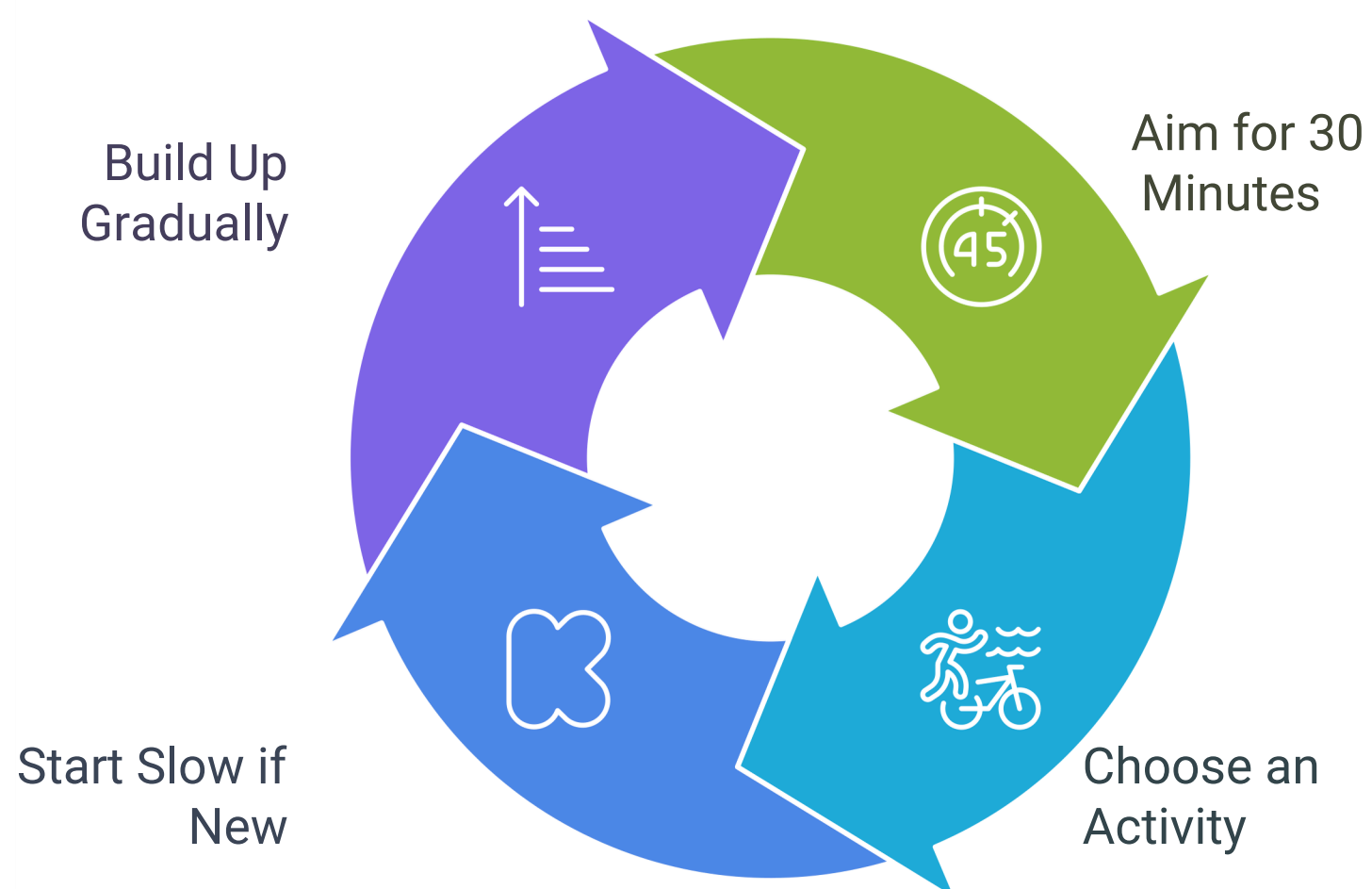
How to maintain a heart-healthy diet?



2. Get Moving

- Aim for **at least 30 minutes of exercise 5 days (2 hours and half) a week**—brisk walking, biking, or dancing all count!
- If you're new to exercise, **start slow** and build up gradually.

Cycle of Regular Exercise



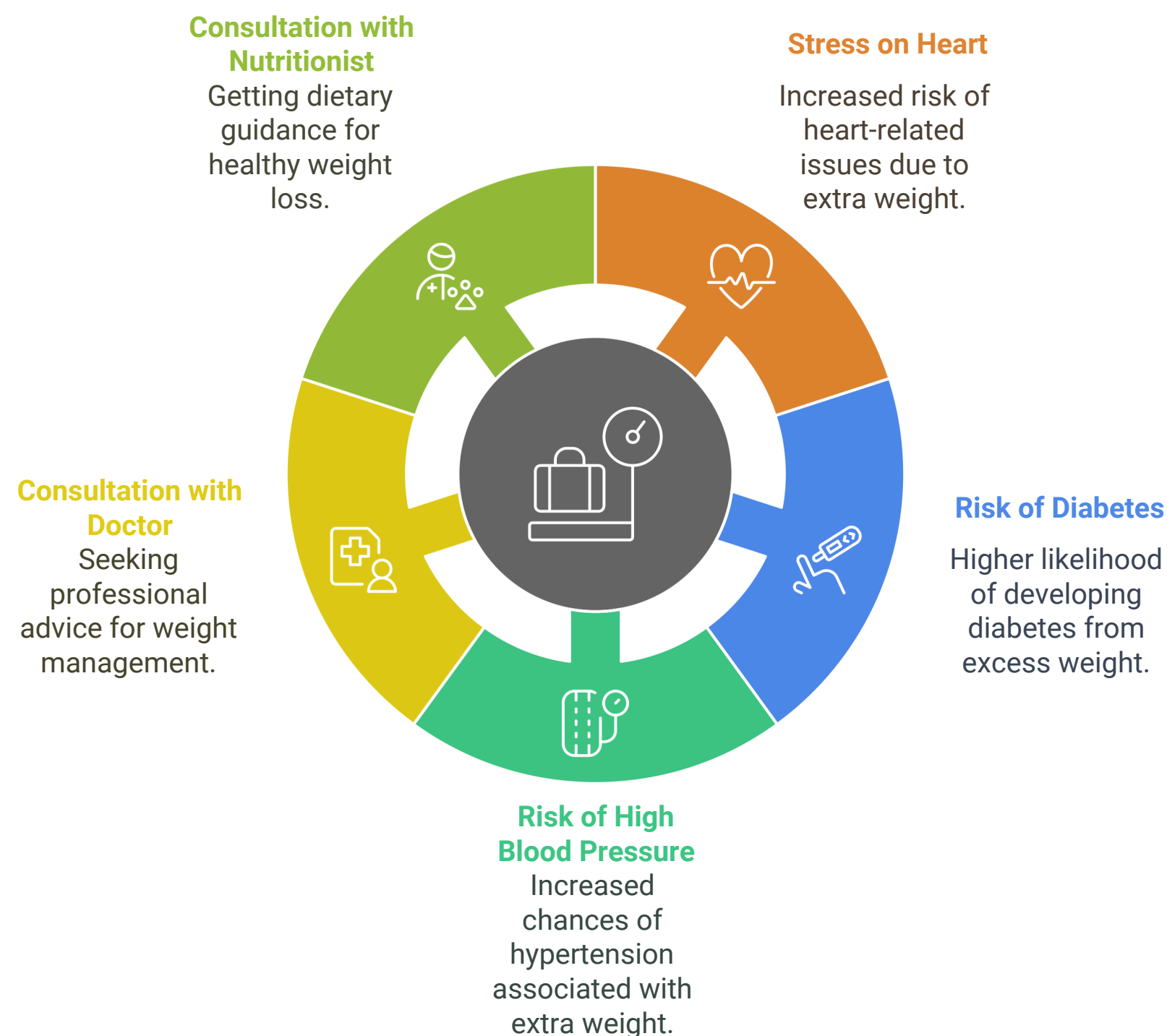
Note: 1 pound = 3,500 calories

Losing 500 calories per day may lead to lose 1/2 to 1 pound over 7 days (1 week)

3. Maintain a Healthy Weight

- **Extra weight** puts stress on your heart and **increases your risk** of **diabetes and high blood pressure**.
- **Talk to a doctor or nutritionist** if you need help with weight loss.

Health Implications of Extra Weight



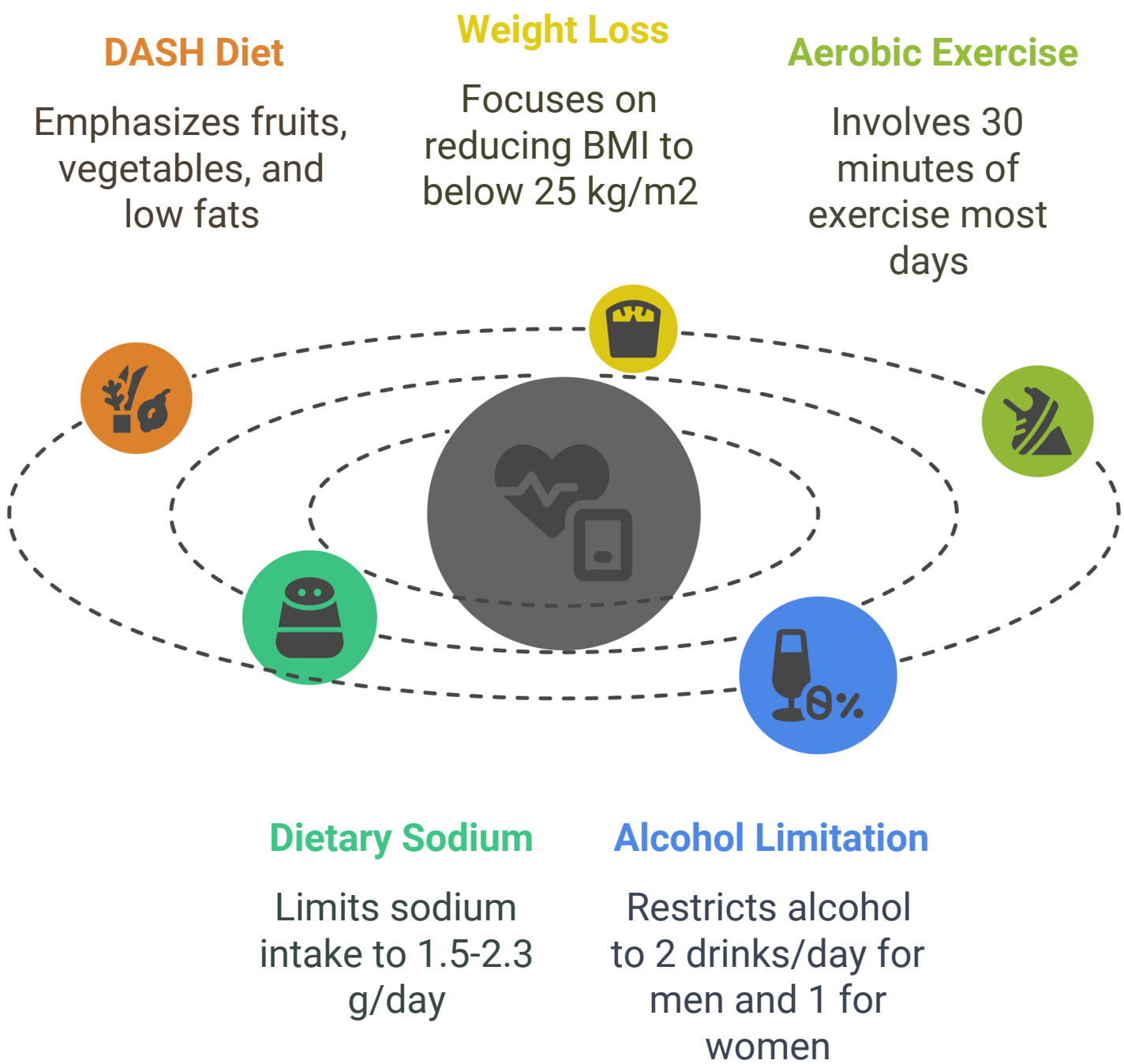
4. Quit Smoking & Limit Alcohol

- **Smoking damages blood vessels**, increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Quitting is one of the best things you can do for your heart!
- **Alcohol in excess raises blood pressure**—drink in moderation or not at all.
- **What does "moderation" mean?**
 - **Men:** No more than **2 drinks per day**.
 - **Women:** No more than **1 drink per day**.

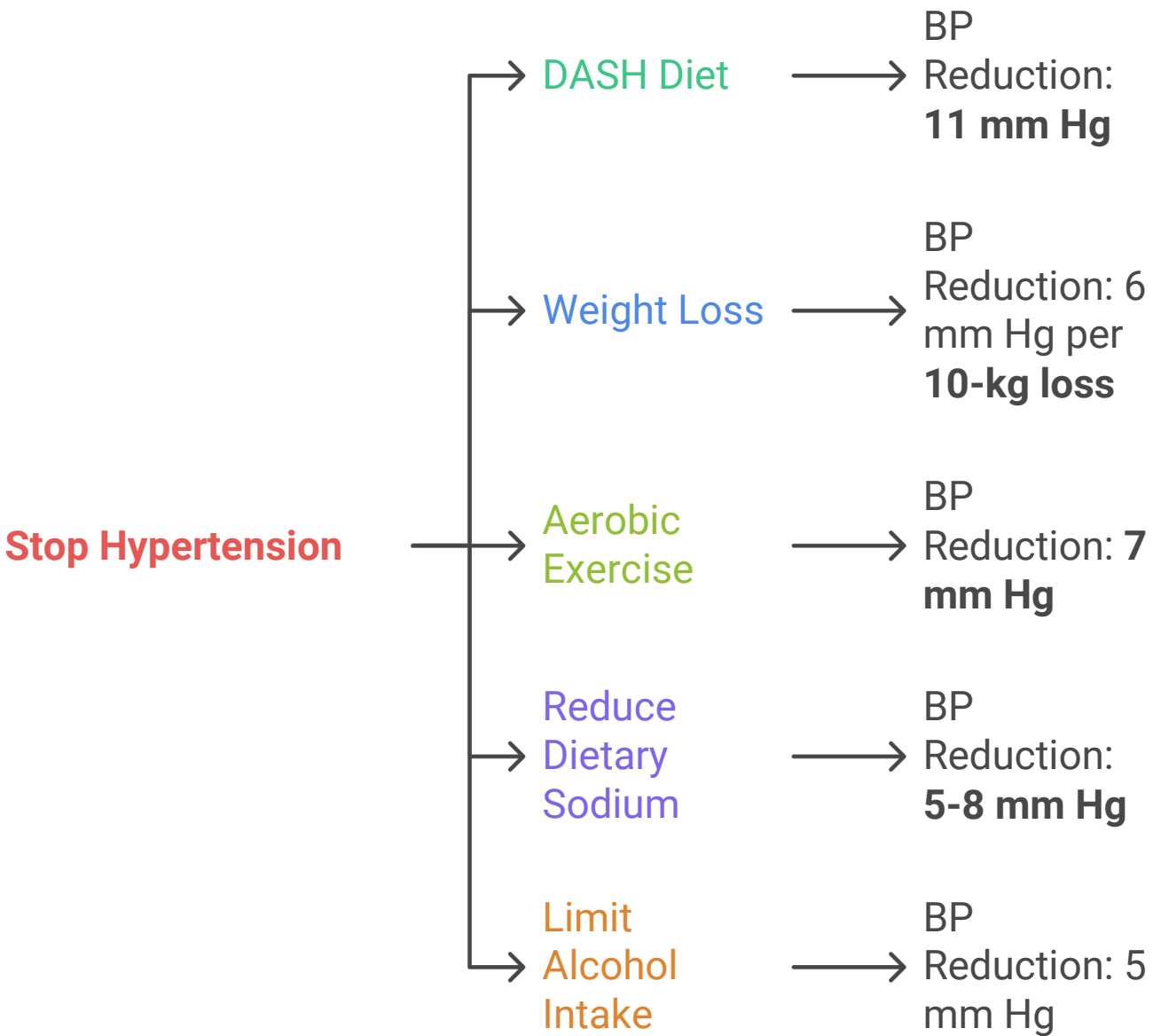
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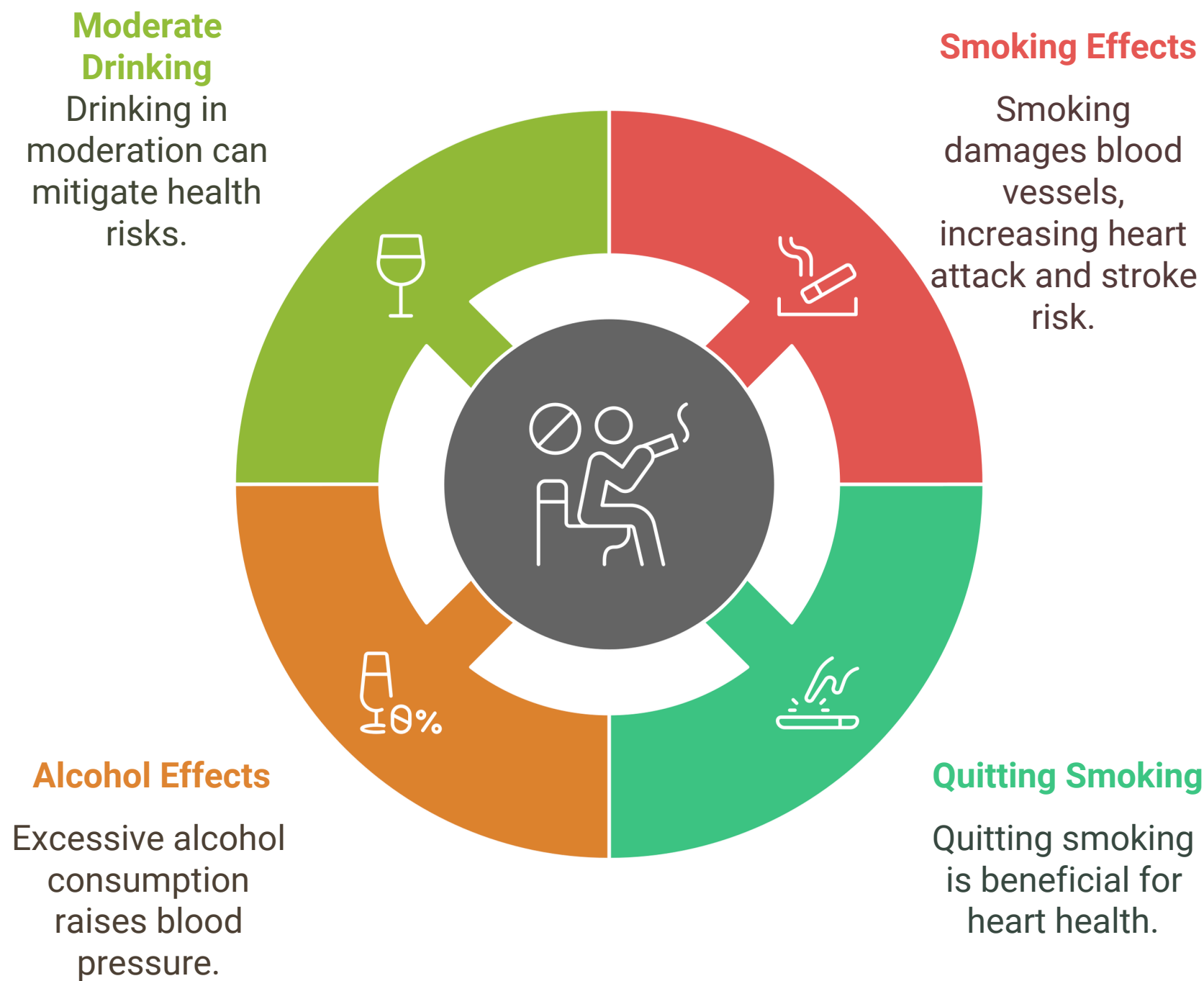
Comprehensive Strategies for Hypertension Management



Lifestyle Interventions for Hypertension



Health Impacts of Lifestyle Choices



Manage Existing Health Conditions

If you have **high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol**, take charge of your health:

- **Check your blood pressure and cholesterol regularly.**
- **Take medications as prescribed** by your doctor.
- **Monitor your blood sugar levels** if you have diabetes.

Blood Pressure Chart*



CLASSIFICATION	SYSTOLIC BLOOD PRESSURE (SBP)		DIASTOLIC BLOOD PRESSURE (DBP)
LOW**	<90	or	<60
NORMAL	<120	and	<80
PREHYPERTENSION	120 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH: STAGE 1 HYPERTENSION	140 – 159	or	90 – 99
HIGH: STAGE 2 HYPERTENSION	≥160	or	≥100

*The data used in this chart come from the "Seventh report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure" (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/hypertension/>).

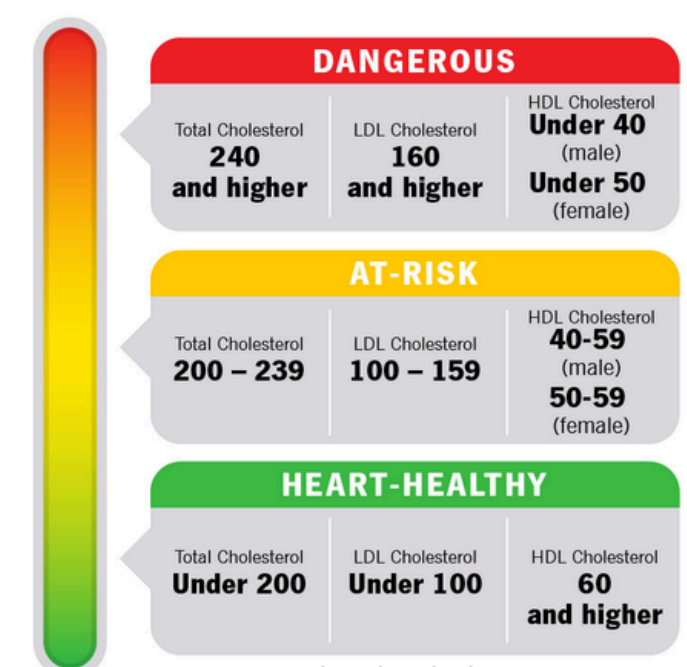
** In general, having lower than normal (120/80) blood pressure is a good thing, but you should consult your doctor or caregiver if you feel your blood pressure is too low and/or you are experiencing symptoms of [hypotension](#).

Blood Glucose Chart

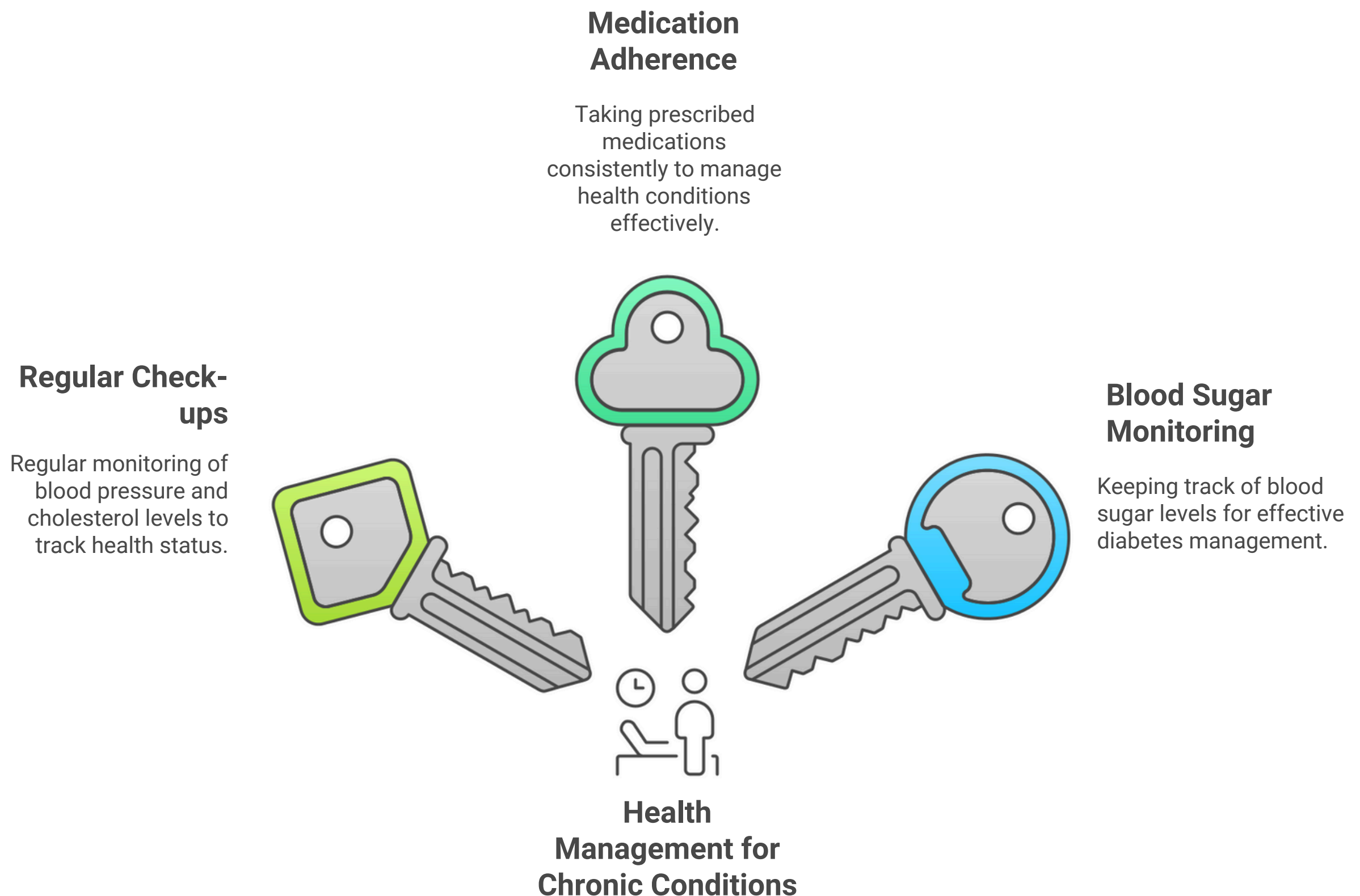
MV Diabetes

Mg/DL	Fasting	After Eating	2 - 3 Hours After Eating
Normal	80 - 100	170 - 200	120 - 140
Impaired Glucose	101 - 125	190 - 230	140 - 160
Diabetic	126+	220 - 300	200+

Cholesterol Levels



Proactive Health Strategies for Managing Chronic Conditions



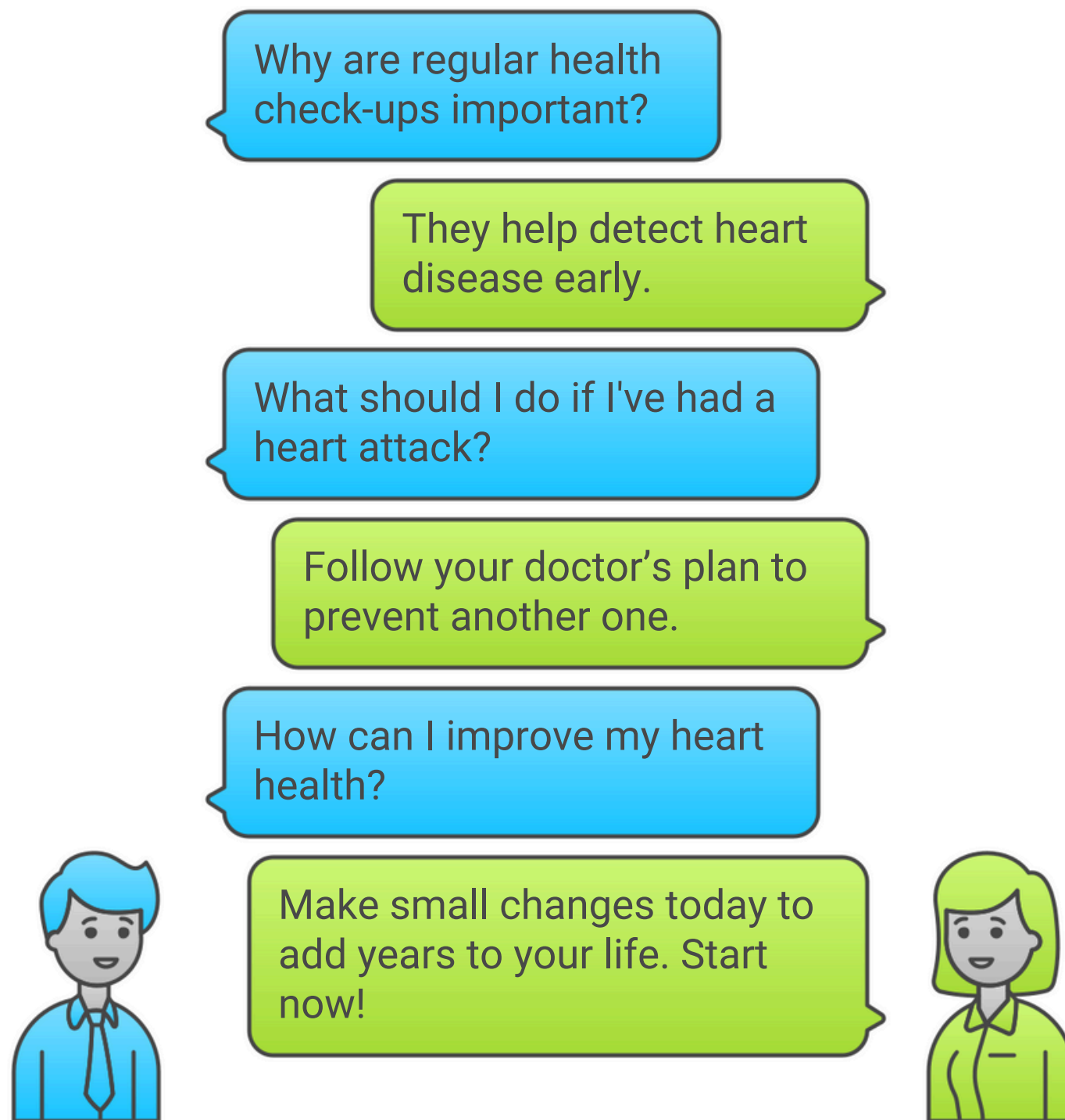
Work with Your Doctor

- **Get regular health check-ups** to detect heart disease early.
- If you've had a **heart attack**, follow your doctor's plan to prevent another one.

Your heart health is in your hands! Small changes today can **add years to your life**. Start now and give your heart the care it deserves!



Heart Health Tips



Community Resources

- **Local Community Health Centers:** They offer free or low-cost screenings and health education.
- **Cultural Organizations:** Engage with local community organizations that promote health awareness and provide resources.
- **Support Groups:** Join groups focused on heart health and wellness for shared experiences and motivation.

Conclusion

Preventing cardiovascular diseases is a community effort. By following these recommendations and making small, manageable changes in your daily life, you can significantly **improve your heart health**. Together, we can build a healthier future for ourselves and our families in New Jersey.

For more information, visit the CDC and the NHS websites or **contact your local health department**. [Stay informed, stay healthy!](#)

References:

1. **CDC website:** <https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/data-research/facts-stats/index.html#:~:text=Heart%20disease%20in%20the%20United%20States&text=Heart%20disease%20is%20the%20leading,every%205%20deaths.12>
2. **NHS Website:** [https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cardiovascular-disease/#:~:text=Cardiovascular%20disease%20\(CVD\)%20is%20a,increased%20risk%20of%20blood%20clots.](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cardiovascular-disease/#:~:text=Cardiovascular%20disease%20(CVD)%20is%20a,increased%20risk%20of%20blood%20clots.)