

# Achieve

A Newsletter  
for AvMed  
Members

## ▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH HEART FAILURE

### What your eyes can reveal about your heart health

The eyes are the window to the... heart? It's true.

**W**hen your eye doctor looks into your eyes, they see a lot more than just vision issues.

Eyes are fed by many blood vessels that are so tiny, they're often the first to be affected by heart problems, such as a congestive heart failure (CHF) flare-up. Here are two key questions your eyes can help answer.

#### Do I have high blood pressure?

High blood pressure can damage blood vessels, arteries, and the heart itself, increasing the risk of a heart attack, heart failure, or stroke.

Fortunately, by looking at the blood vessels of the retina, an eye doctor can detect changes that may signal future problems with blood pressure.

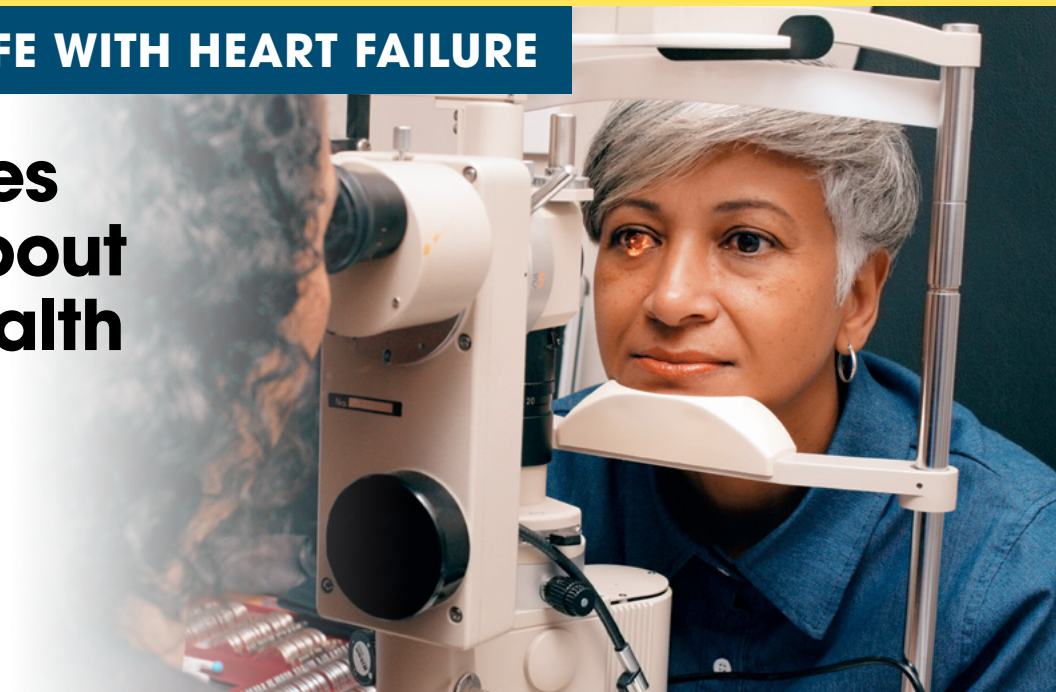
#### Am I at risk of a stroke?

Your eyes are part of the brain, so they can also serve as an early warning system for a stroke. A stroke happens when a blood vessel that feeds the brain gets clogged or bursts. Sometimes, a similar issue happens in the blood vessels in the

eyes. This is known as an "eye stroke."

Because eye stroke has been associated with a brain-related stroke, it is crucial for a patient with this diagnosis to seek immediate testing at a stroke center.

Bottom line: It's wise to visit your eye doctor on a regular basis. Yes, they'll check your vision, but what they find in the process might be even more important.





## How to ease into a lower-salt diet and still love your food

**S**alt causes fluid retention, which puts added strain on your heart and can worsen congestive heart failure (CHF) symptoms. The good news? Cutting back on salt doesn't mean giving up on flavor. These tips can help ease the transition.

### Check food labels for sodium content.

Packaged foods often contain high levels

of sodium. Start by reading labels closely to understand how much sodium is in each serving. Aim to choose foods with less than 140 mg of sodium per serving, which is considered "low sodium."

### Buy reduced-sodium products.

Low-sodium or no-sodium versions of foods like soups, sauces, and canned goods offer the same convenience

but with less salt. (Pro tip: Draining and rinsing canned foods like beans can remove around 40% of the sodium.)

**Flavor with herbs and spices.** Experiment with herbs and spices to add layers of flavor without relying on salt. Try combinations like garlic and rosemary, basil and oregano, or black pepper with lemon zest.

**Be careful with condiments.** Condiments like soy sauce, ketchup, and salad dressings can be surprisingly high in sodium. Opt for low-sodium versions when possible and use condiments sparingly.

**Give your taste buds time to adjust.** Taste buds adjust over time. Soon, foods with less salt will taste just right to you. Be patient with yourself and celebrate small wins along the way as you settle into a lower-sodium lifestyle.



### To reach a Case Manager

Simply call 1-833-609-0735 or email [DM@AvMed.org](mailto:DM@AvMed.org) or scan the QR code provided.



# Healthy Eating Made Simple



## WHICH ARE HEALTHIEST?

### Starchy vs. non-starchy vegetables

**V**egetables are essential to a healthy diet. But knowing which veggies are “starchy” and which are “non-starchy” can help you make choices that support steady blood sugar levels. Here’s what to know about these types of veggies and how to incorporate them into balanced meals.

#### STARCHY VEGETABLES

While all vegetables have health benefits, starchy ones contain more carbohydrates. This may lead to a quicker rise in blood sugar. They’re still packed with nutrients, which makes them an important part of a balanced diet — just in smaller portions. Examples include:

- Potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Corn
- Beans and lentils
- Winter squash (like butternut and acorn)

#### NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES

Non-starchy vegetables are naturally lower in carbs, which makes them less likely to cause blood sugar spikes. They are often rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber, which supports digestion and overall health. Examples include:

- Leafy greens (spinach, kale)
- Broccoli and cauliflower
- Bell peppers
- Summer squash (like zucchini)
- Mushrooms
- Asparagus

#### BALANCED EATING FOR BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL

**Control portions:** Limit starchy vegetables to one cup per meal. Use a measuring cup to help you stay on track.

**Pair with protein:** Eating starchy veggies with a protein, like chicken or tofu, helps keep blood sugar stable.

**Listen to your body:** Do certain veggies leave you feeling sluggish or energized?

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## Recipe



## Black beans and rice

Serves 16 | Prep time: 15 min

This classic dish is hearty, flavorful, and filling.

### Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 1 large green bell pepper, diced
- 4-5 aji cachucha, pierced
- 2-3 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 culantro leaves
- 4 bay leaves
- ½ Tbsp ground cumin
- 4-5 Tbsp prosecco wine vinegar or sweet white wine vinegar
- 4-5 Tbsp regular white vinegar
- 8 15-16 oz cans black beans (low sodium, undrained)
- Salt to taste

### Instructions

- 1.** In a large Dutch oven or soup pot, heat the oil over a low to medium setting, then add all ingredients except the beans and water. Sauté until the onions soften and turn yellow (about 5 minutes).
- 2.** Add the undrained beans and water. If you like thicker beans, omit the water. Raise the heat and simmer (or boil) for 20 minutes. Add salt and adjust seasonings to taste.

**Nutrition facts** Calories 205  
Fat 3 g | Carbs 35 g | Fiber 10.5 g  
Protein 11 g