

Your Heart is a BEAST!

Background for Facilitators

Facilitators are not expected to print or distribute background information to participants unless recommended by their program coordinator.

Cardiovascular System and Heart Failure

- [How Does Blood Flow Through Your Body?](#) (Cleveland Clinic)
- [Heart Health and Aging](#) (National Institute on Aging)
- [What is Cardiovascular Disease?](#) (American Heart Association)
- [Amazing Heart Facts](#) (PBS Nova)
- [Circulation Infographic](#) (Live Science)

Note: Coordinators might enjoy the [anatomy of the cardiovascular system](#).

Behavior Goals

Participants will:

1. Gain new knowledge about the cardiovascular system's critical functions.
2. Identify at least one way to improve their sleep habits.

Meeting Preparation

1. Review newsletter content. Send questions or concerns to your coordinator.
2. Review background resources (website links provided above).
3. Choose one of the recipe options. Make the recipe at least once before the meeting. Write down helpful tips to share with group.
4. Determine how to transport and taste featured food tasting.

Props

- If you have access to a plastic model of the heart or a good drawing of the cardiovascular system, use in a display to create greater interest in the topic.
- Use a small prop that each person can use during discussions to show they agree or believe something is true. Ideas: Buy paper heart decorations on sale from Valentine's Day. Glue paper hearts to the top of a straw, popsicle stick or pencil.
- If you choose to show or use an air fryer for food tasting, make sure you're comfortable using it. Seniors like to learn about new trends but cost should always be a consideration.

Use the Nutrition Facts Label to choose foods with less saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. Older adults often get too much of these nutrients.

! The suggested wording for the presentation is in regular font and the **facilitator directions are in bold, dark red italic**. It's best not to read the presentation, but to use your own words, staying close to the meaning.

Conversation

Welcome back to Fresh Conversations! The Iowa Department of Public Health took a winter break from writing newsletters but we're excited to get started again. If your group also took a break, spend a few minutes catching up! Introduce and welcome newcomers.

Introduction

This is the first in a series of three meetings focused on cardiovascular health. **Check in to make sure the group understands the term “cardiovascular.” Page 1 has helpful information.** Today, I hope you'll discover interesting, helpful information and leave with a greater appreciation for your heart and blood vessels.

No matter your age—it's never too late to focus on heart health.

During our meetings in April and May, we'll talk about specific food patterns that support cardiovascular health, examine heart healthy “claims” on food labels and learn how to choose an oil that's right for you.

Nutrition Discussion

We use heart shapes to show we care about friends and family. But how often do you show a little love to your own heart? Do you spend much time thinking about how blood flows from your heart through arteries and veins? **Allow time for responses. If someone in the group has experienced a serious heart condition or cared for someone with heart disease, they may think about it often.**

I want to give you an opportunity to reflect on what your heart, lungs and blood do for you every day...all day...year after year. It's really quite amazing.

Invite people to find a pulse at their wrist or neck, close their eyes and use their imaginations...then, read the information on pages 4-5 about the cardiovascular system.

Tasting Activity

Option 1: Banana ice cream from the newsletter.

Q: Why is this banana ice cream recipe a healthy option for dessert?

Banana a naturally sweet fruit; no added sugars in recipe unless you add toppings; rich in potassium and fiber; no saturated fat; still has calories but less than typical ice cream.

Teaching tips:

1. Slice bananas into thin pieces before freezing to make them easier to blend.
2. This is a one-ingredient recipe and a great way to use up over-ripe bananas.
3. Don't over-do the milk; it can make the ice cream runny.
4. If you like soft-serve consistency, eat it right away. For more traditional scoops, freeze in an airtight container and serve later.

Option 2: Demonstrate how to use an air fryer. Compare roasted potatoes in the air fryer—a healthier version of French fries. (Start recipe at the beginning of the meeting.)

Option 3: Taste different varieties of oranges, tangerines or grapefruits. In addition to taste and availability, include price comparisons.

Sleep

Note the article about sleep on page 3. More and more research is showing that sleep is really important to our physical and mental health—including cardiovascular health. It's easy to see the impact of sleep in small children, right? What happens when they don't get enough sleep?

Allow group time to offer a few examples. Behavior examples will likely be shared but remind the group that their bodies do all sorts of things during sleep that we don't see or appreciate. This is true for adults, as well.

The article identifies five behaviors that support sleep and cardiovascular health. I'm going to read each behavior. Raise your "heart" **use prop** if the description is true for you.

1. You get up early and go to bed early.
2. You sleep 7 to 8 hours each night.
3. You rarely have trouble with insomnia (can't sleep; lie in bed awake)
4. You don't snore.
5. You aren't often sleepy during the day.

Which behavior had the fewest "hearts" raised? Focus a group discussion on appropriate actions that could help people achieve it. Refer to "Sleep Tips" article on page 3 for ideas. DID YOU KNOW that if you stop drinking caffeinated coffee at noon, one quarter of the caffeine is still circulating in your body at midnight?

Optional Activity

Invite a trained health educator to demonstrate how physical activity increases heart rate.

Take Action

Use the "heart sticks" to share one small step they want to take toward better sleep in 2020.

Cardiovascular System

Ask group to close their eyes. Blood is the fluid of life.

- It flows through arteries to transport oxygen from the lungs to [tissues](#) throughout your body.
- It carries nutrients from the foods you eat and hormones from glands throughout the body.

Blood is the fluid of health.

- It transports disease-fighting substances to tissues and waste to the kidneys.
- Because it contains living cells, blood is alive.

Can you still feel your pulse? **Observe the group.** You're feeling blood flow through an artery.

Imagine the right side of your heart. Your amazing system of small and large veins just delivered blood to the right side of your heart. The pump on the right side of your heart pushes the blood into your lungs.

Your lungs remove the carbon dioxide from your blood (**breathe out**) and transfers fresh oxygen to your red blood cells (**breathe in**).

The oxygenated blood goes back to your heart on the left side, where a second pump pushes it out to all parts of your body through your arteries.

Some of the oxygenated blood travels to your brain, some flows through coronary arteries to keep your heart muscle pumping and the rest flows down through a system of arteries in your arms, abdomen and legs. The oxygenated blood must flow to every part of your body.

Ask group to open their eyes.

Q: When the blood is ready to return to the heart and lungs, how does it get there? **Crosses through tiny capillaries to veins.**

Q: How fast does blood flow through the body? **Actual speed depends on the size of the blood vessel but overall, about 5 quarts of blood per minute are transported around an average adult's body.**

Optional Discussion (If time permits)

Q: How are veins similar to a watershed or a system of small waterways, streams, creeks and rivers? **Refer to the drawing on page 2 of the arteries (red) and veins (blue). Discuss. Share information if the group struggles with the analogy.**

The blood vessels that return blood to the heart (think blue) are much like the streams, creeks and rivers that carry surface water through a watershed. Very tiny capillaries return blood through increasingly larger vessels on the way to the heart.

In a similar way, rain water and melted snow drain and flow off the land, first in small brooks, then larger streams and eventually creeks and rivers (increasing in size to hold more water).

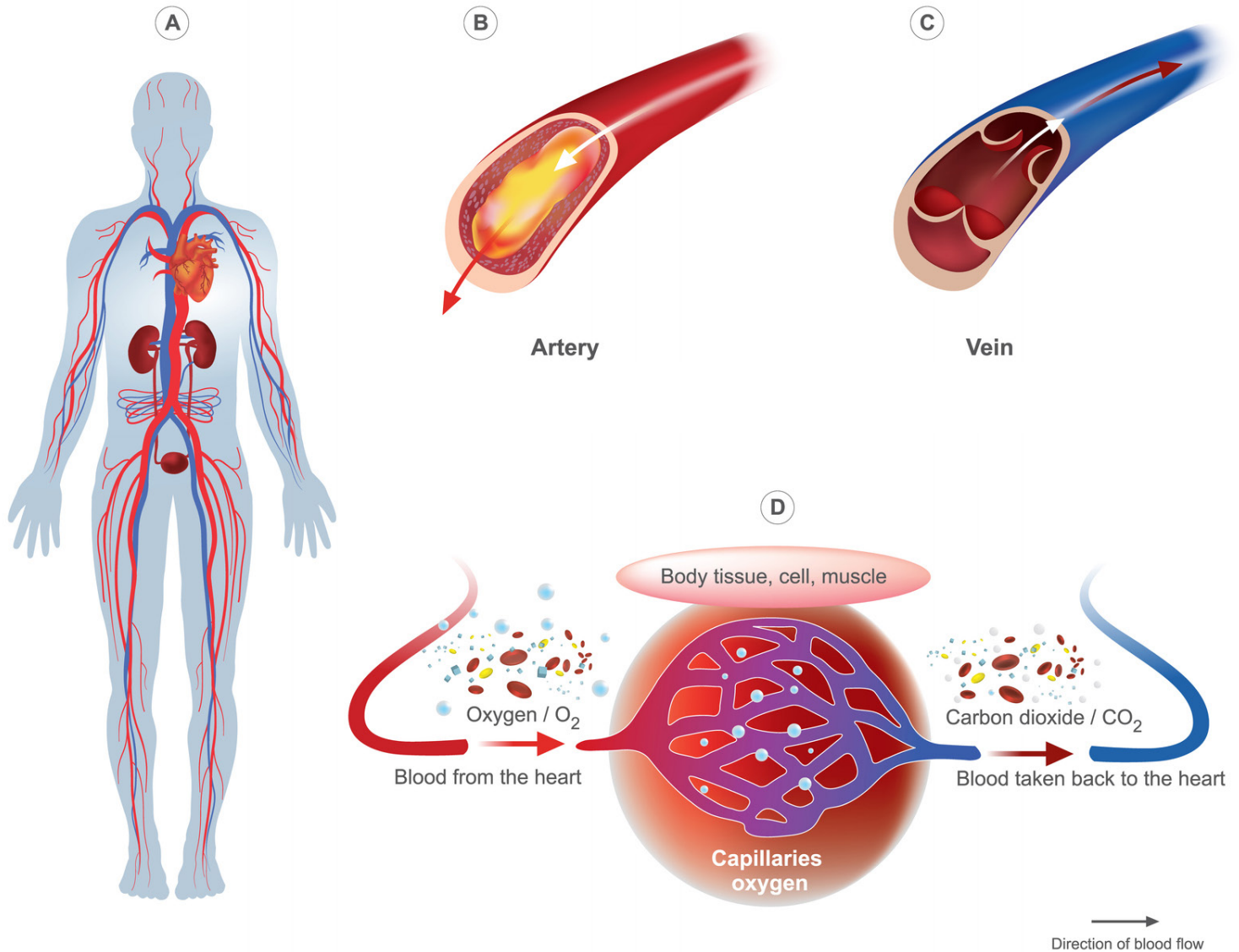
Q: How big are our veins? We can see a few underneath our skin. ***Take a moment to look at veins through skin on wrists or top of hands.***

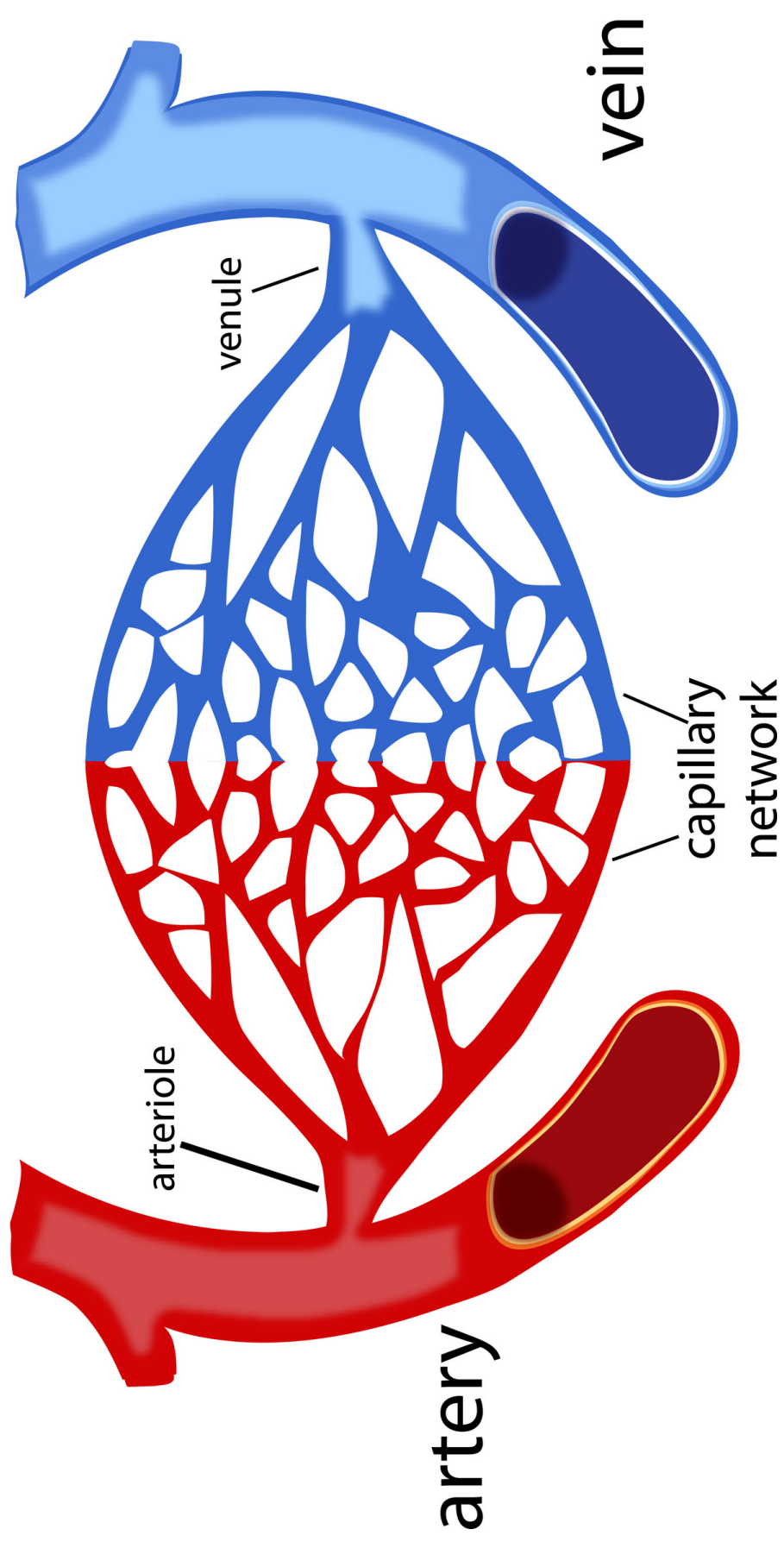
Veins are small and large. (A lab tech likes a larger vein when they take blood, right?) The largest veins in the body – the inferior and superior vena cava – average $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter. ***Cut two paper circles to demonstrate size or look in a hardware or craft store to find an appropriate object with that diameter. (e.g., a foam cylinder)***

The smallest blood vessels in the body are capillaries—about 5 to 10 micrometers in diameter. For comparison, a strand of human hair measures 17 micrometers. Capillary walls are really thin—just one cell thick. They connect arteries and veins and are the smallest blood vessels in the body. Your lungs are loaded with capillaries to allow the blood to release carbon dioxide and take in oxygen.

Vascular

(blood flow through the body)





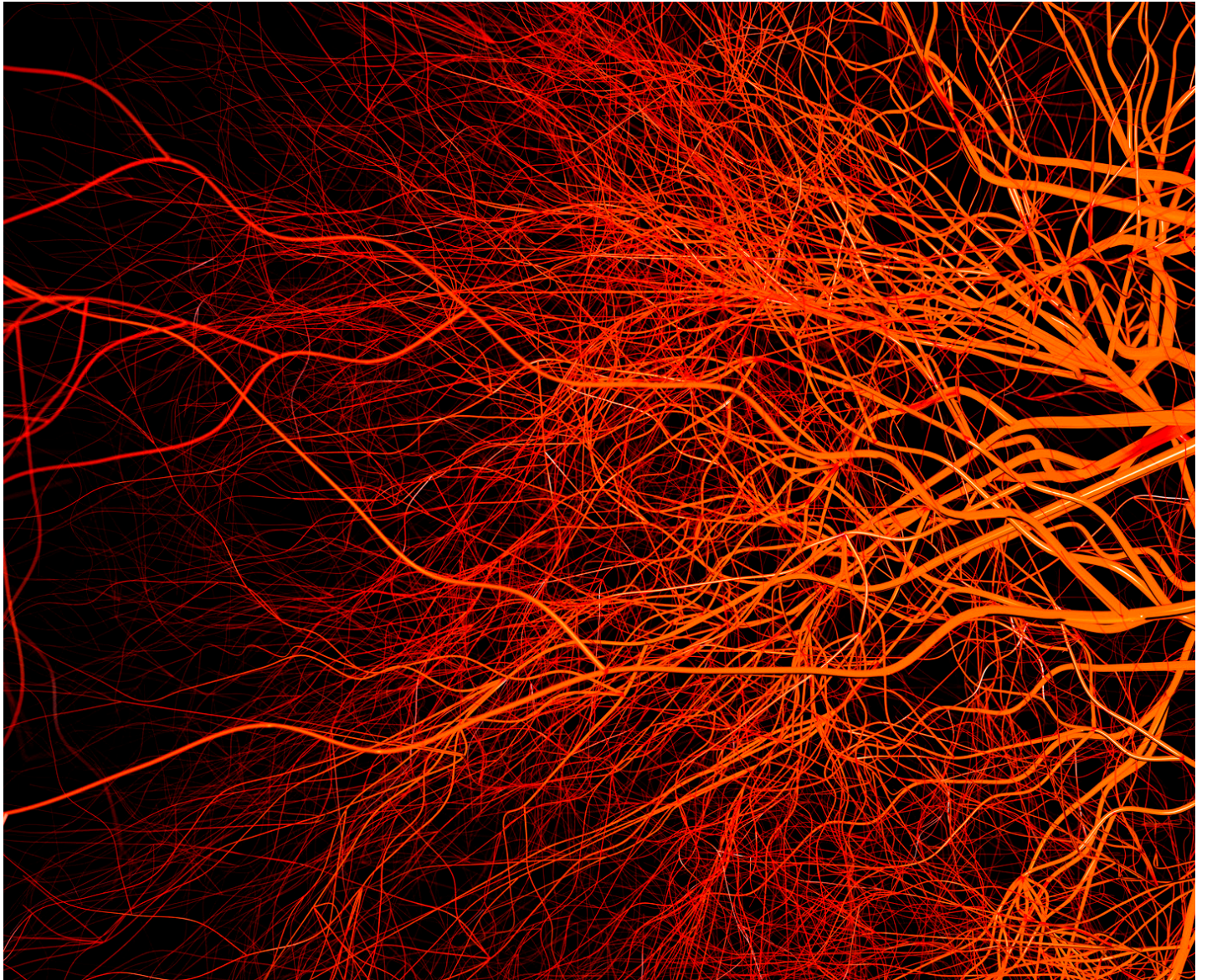


Photo of blood vessels



FRESH

CONVERSATIONS



Contact:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Iowa Nutrition Network
Iowa Department of Public Health
(515) 281-6047

What is the
conversation
about?

March Conversations

- Your amazing heart!
- Get tips on how to stay heart healthy
- Love ice cream? Try a tasty alternative

When?

Where?

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Information & resources for seniors with home & family questions
ISU AnswerLine 1-800-262-3804