

Heart Health: The DASH diet

Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

Research has shown that high blood pressure or hypertension can improve with a DASH eating plan. The DASH plan emphasizes eating more fruits and vegetables, choosing whole grains, and using dairy foods and proteins that are low in saturated fat and cholesterol. It also focuses on decreasing salt and sodium intake.

Getting Started

Work on small changes.

- Keep fruits and vegetables on hand. Use frozen, canned, or dried if they are more convenient than fresh. Try ready-to-eat items, like pre-peeled carrots, pre-washed salad mix, or single serving cans of fruit.
- If you already eat one or two vegetables a day try adding a serving at lunch and another at dinner to reach 4-5 servings per day. If you are not eating much fruit or only have juice at breakfast try adding a serving to your meals or have fruit for a snack.
- Slowly increase your use of fat free and low fat dairy products to three servings a day. Try drinking milk with lunch or dinner instead of alcohol, sugar-sweetened soda, or tea. Choose low fat (1%) or fat free (skim) milk to decrease your intake of saturated fat, total fat, cholesterol, and calories.
- Read food labels on margarines and salad dressings. Choose those lowest in saturated fat.

Consider meat as a part of the whole meal and not the focus.

- Limit meat to 6 ounces a day – three to four ounces is about the size of a deck of cards. When you look at your plate you will want $\frac{1}{4}$ of the plate to have meat, chicken, turkey, or fish, $\frac{1}{2}$ of the plate to be filled with vegetables, and the other $\frac{1}{4}$ of the plate to have a starch such as potato, rice, or pasta.
- Think about adding two or more vegetarian-style (meatless) meals each week. The protein you need could come from items like dry beans, soy burgers, or tofu.
- Increase servings of fruit and vegetables, whole grain rice, pasta, and dry beans in meals. This will help you to feel full without eating too much meat. Try casseroles, pasta, or stir-fry dishes that have less meat and more vegetables, grains and dry beans.

Use fruits or other foods low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and calories as desserts and snacks.

- Fruits and other low fat foods offer great taste and variety. Use fruits canned in their own juice. Fresh fruits need little or no preparation. Dried fruits are a good choice to carry with you.
- Try these snack ideas: unsalted pretzels or nuts mixed with raisins, a fruit smoothie made by blending plain low-fat yogurt and fruit; popcorn with no added salt or butter; and raw vegetables.

Remember, here are things you can do to control your blood pressure!

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be physically active.
- Follow a healthy eating plan that includes foods that are low in salt and sodium.
- Take blood pressure pills as directed by your doctor.

Tips to Reduce Sodium

Do not add salt to the food you are eating.

When cooking use half of the salt called for in the recipe.

Vegetables-Buy fresh, plain frozen, or canned with “no added salt”.

Use fresh chicken, turkey, fish, and lean meats. Avoid canned, smoked, or processed meats.

Limit cured foods (such as bacon or ham), foods packed in brine (such as pickles, olives, and sauerkraut), and condiments (such as MSG, soy sauce, mustard, catsup, and barbecue sauce).

Be spicy instead of salty. Flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends.

Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt. Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have added salt.

Cut back on frozen dinners, pizza, and canned soups and broths, or use the reduced sodium varieties.

When eating out; order foods without sauces and ask that no salt, soy sauce, or other sodium containing seasoning is used in preparation.

Following the Dash Diet

The DASH eating plan shown below is based on 2,000 calories per day. Aim to keep *sodium intake less than 2300 milligrams per day, as low as 1500 mg, if you can.* Use this chart to help you plan your menus.

Food Group	Daily Servings	Serving Sizes	Ideas	Benefits
Grains & Grain Products	7 – 8	1 slice of bread ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal 1 ounce dry cereal (check the label; 1 ounce may be ½-1 ¼ cups)	whole wheat bread, pita bread, bagel, grits, cereals, oatmeal, crackers, unsalted pretzels	major sources of energy and fiber
Vegetables	4 – 5	1 cup raw leafy or ½ cup cooked vegetables 6 ounces vegetable juice, low salt	tomatoes, carrots, green squash, broccoli, turnip greens, spinach, green beans	rich sources of potassium, fiber and magnesium
Fruits	4 – 5	1 medium fruit ¼ cup dried fruit ½ cup fresh, frozen 6 ounce fruit juice	apricots, bananas, dates, oranges, orange juice, grapefruit, mangoes, peaches, pineapples	rich sources of potassium, fiber, and magnesium
Low fat or fat-free dairy foods	2 – 3	8 ounces milk 1 cup yogurt 1½ ounces cheese	skim or low fat (1%) milk, fat-free or low fat buttermilk, fat free or low fat yogurt, low fat and fat-free cheese	major sources of calcium and protein
Meats, poultry, and fish	2 or less	3 ounces cooked meat, chicken, turkey, or fish	select lean meats trim away visible fats broil, roast, or boil, remove skin from chicken or turkey	rich sources of protein and magnesium
Nuts, seeds, and dry beans	4 – 5 per week	½ cup or 1½ ounces nuts 2 tablespoons or ½ ounce seeds ½ cup cooked dry beans	almonds, filberts, mixed nuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds, kidney beans, lentils, peas	rich sources of energy, protein, potassium, fiber, and magnesium
Fats and oils	2 – 3	1 teaspoon soft margarine 1 tablespoons low-fat mayonnaise, 2 tablespoons light salad dressing, 1 teaspoon vegetable oil	soft margarine, low-fat mayonnaise, light salad dressing, vegetable oil such as olive, canola, corn, or safflower	27% of calories in the DASH diet come from fat. This includes the amount in or added to foods
Sweets	5 per week	1 tablespoon sugar 1 tablespoon jelly or jam ½ ounce jelly beans 8 ounces lemonade	maple syrup, sugar, jelly, jam, fruit-flavored gelatin, jelly beans, hard candy, fruit punch, sorbet, ices	sweets should be low in fat

To learn more about high blood pressure, contact the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/index.htm> or call 1-800-575-WELL.

Nutrition